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A SNAPT GOLD RING.

BY

FREDERICK WEDMORE.

“The hour which might have been, yet might not be,
Which man's and woman's heart conceived and bore
Yet whereof life was barren,—on what shore
Bides it the breaking of Time's weary sea?”—D. G. ROSSETTI.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO


PATTY WEDMORE.

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A SNAPT GOLD RING.

CHAPTER I.

IF London streets are tolerable at any time, they are tolerable in the cheerful bustle of early evening, when in the main thoroughfares carriage traffic is lessened, when shopping is over, when the stress of daily occupations is past, and the stream of middle-class life, released from counter and work-room, sets briskly westward for an hour of exercise in the fresher air of suburb or park. So thought Paul Warner, as he stood by the door of his club, in Hanover Square, about eight o'clock on a July evening, and considered what he should do.

He had performed the later duties of the day : having dined satisfactorily, and ascertained with some expenditure of time and trouble that there was nothing in the papers. His earlier tasks had been not less duly fulfilled ; for he had corrected some bad drawing in a study made the day before, and had added a few effective touches to a picture which had cost him three months' labour. Disinclined for further work, but disposed to contemplate with interest whatever slight affairs might arrest his attention, he gazed across the Square with the ready curiosity of a *flâneur*, and wished, like the Athenians, for some new thing.

An opera-bound carriage, with well-dressed women, drove rapidly by ; a flower-girl crossed the Square, with her basket of faded geraniums ; a match-boy offered lights for a halfpenny.

There was nothing *new*.

Only a cooling breeze came down the length of Brook Street from the Park : the light smoke steadily ascended from chimneys in the house-

roofs, opposite the club ; and, high above the mazes of the town, thin feathery clouds, faint rose-coloured, were combed out delicately, upon the blue-grey breadth of placid evening-sky.

“ I will go westward, like the course of empire,—especially as I live in that direction,” thought Mr. Warner. “ At this hour the Park will at all events be full of people who are there because they like it, and not because it is ‘ the thing.’ I will take the Oxford Street way.” And in five minutes he was in Oxford Street : on the broad pavement of the upper side. There was the usual throng of homeward-bent or pleasure-bent foot-passengers : counting-house clerks who were late ; artisans’ wives, with baskets holding the purchases they had made in Holborn ; milliners’ assistants, burdened with newspaper-parcels which there seemed no way of carrying ; shopmen and their sweet-hearts, arm-in-arm ; enterprising boys who recommended comic journals ; human “ sandwiches,” bearing the board-advertisements of concert and theatre ; and here and there a

detective, walking as if the very pavement were an object of serious suspicion.

At the corner of Vere Street there was a cluster of people. At the corner of Bond Street, exactly opposite, there was a similar gathering. Had there been an accident in the road, or a chimney on fire, or was some Royal visitor to London expected soon to pass? Mr. Warner stopped; saw nothing particular; and cast his eye upon police constable 49 B. That officer looked, to say the least, uninviting; and I am not disposed to blame Mr. Warner severely for appealing to the pleasantest face in the little crowd—it was also one of the nearest to him—and asking what had happened.

The pleasantest face belonged to a girl of about nineteen, who turned at once to answer the question. Her full brown eyes, intelligent and bright, were little shaded by her bonnet of black lace, nor was her erect lithe figure hidden by the short blue jacket and light grey dress, with train sweeping the pavement. Ample

brown hair, strong and slightly waving—not soft or silky—was gathered in three broad rolls at the back of the head. The features were scarcely regular ; yet they were not wanting in a certain harmony, which was more the result of a vividness and mobility of expression than of actual physical beauty. There was nothing, then, to strike an admirer of living dolls ; but face and gesture spoke—spoke plainly in the firm line of the mouth, in the quick light in the eyes, in the bold curve of vigorous hair, and in the swift unhesitating movement — of a strength of nature not often possessed by girls so young, and least of all possessed by those about whose aimless lives there has been wound the velvet chain of “English comforts.”

Perhaps Paul Warner, looking at the bright countenance, was a little disappointed by the answer. If so, he should have remembered that his own question had been perfectly commonplace, and that in all probability the girl was merely a milliner.

"I haven't the least idea what it is," said the young woman; "but I expect it's nothing worth waiting for." And she left the cluster of people.

Her way lay down Oxford Street: so did Paul Warner's. It would have been easy for him to have raised his hat, and crossed to the other side. But he did not do so; and, having walked a score of steps by the side of the girl, it seemed slighting to turn off without a word or a sign.

"You are going home alone?" said the bachelor, who was never very brilliant upon awkward occasions.


"I walk home alone every evening," was the reply; "and I walk to business every morning, -too."

"The amount of energy you need must depend upon the distance."

"What a civil way of putting a question! I live at Notting Hill."

"Quite a journey for you," suggested Paul.

"They know me on the road; and at one



or two shops they say the clocks are set by me. For I leave home at half-past eight, and get to business exactly at nine. It takes me half-an-hour to walk from Notting Hill to Bond Street, if I put on the steam—which I always do. *This* sort of walking wouldn't do it, though."

"You make a long day," said Mr. Warner, considerately, "and I thought you must be tired. We will walk faster, however. And if it's not a very rude question, what is the business that occupies you so?"

"I'm in a corset-maker's shop; a stay-maker's—you understand?"

"Behind the counter?"

"Sometimes; but quite as often upstairs, where I work a sewing-machine. Only, every evening I have to undress my window in the shop, and every morning I dress it."

Warner smiled. She spoke as if the window were a child.

"They won't let anybody else do it now. Once, another girl did, and in the morning there *was* a pretty row, indeed. A pair of silk stays

—mauve *moirés*, too—were quite spoiled. Put away in a dusty drawer. So now I always do it.”

“You evidently understand the business,” remarked Mr. Warner.

“Well, I ought to; for it’s five years that I’ve been working at it—that is, ever since I was fourteen years old. We used to do hand-work at first, and when the sewing-machines came in it would have been all up with me if I hadn’t got father to buy me a small one, that I learned to use in the evenings at home.”

“So you know how to take care of yourself, and be up to the times.”

Kate Lemon laughed, and answered, “Perhaps I do. Much care would be taken of me if I didn’t take care of myself!”

She grew graver then, and added, “A girl has need to, here in London: the streets at night show that, unless you shut your eyes.”

“Then you don’t go much to places of amusement. Never been to Cremorne, I suppose?”

Kate hesitated for a minute; then quickly

spoke,—“ Well, I won't tell you a story. I did go to Cremorne once.”

“ And why ? ”

“ I went from curiosity, to see Hilda Grant. You've heard of her ? ”

Warner nodded.

“ Seen her photographs, perhaps ? Every-one has. She used to go to school with me. How she was dressed, that evening at Cremorne ! Gracious me ! She did look altered. And, do you know, she recognised me at once, and touched me on the shoulder.”

“ What did you do then ? ”

“ Never spoke or looked round. How *could* I ? Poor silly thing ! When a girl has got a good home of her own, she should stick to it. At least, that's *my* opinion. Hilda Grant was always rather fast, and never cared about work. I like work and fun too.”

“ I can tell you,” said Warner, “ you are a thousand times happier than she is ; though all London talks about her diamonds and her painted beauty.”

These were simple words, but spoken with genuine impulse. Paul's companion 'looked up at him, in the pleasure of confidence. It was a touch of nature.

The dusk had fallen now. They were near the Marble Arch ; and by the broad Park-side the line of lamps glimmered down the long Bayswater Road, in the grey of evening.

Paul Warner took the girl's hand, and drew it within his arm.

CHAPTER II.

No two persons who walked that evening, in the beginning of July, along the streets of London, can have presented in their characters a much stronger contrast than did Paul Warner and Kate Lemon. They were alike, perhaps, in one point only—disregard of the conventional. And even here they were not quite alike, since the girl's was an unconscious disregard, while the man derived a frequent satisfaction in measuring the gulf that lay between himself and those whose first question in the acts of Life is, "What will people say?" A poet of society has told us, with the truth that wounds, that ours is a world

Where many are afraid of God,
But more, of Mrs. Grundy.

Warner might belong to the first class : he could never belong to the second. Now the little stay-maker knew nothing beyond the streets of London ; and no quick-thoughted girl, familiar with those streets, could have been simpler-minded. She had a merry country-heart, in the crowded town.

But Warner's life had been a different life, and had borne a very different fruit. He was the son of an English physician, who had practised in Paris. His mother was a French-woman. His childhood, chiefly spent in Paris, had been in character half-French, half-English. He had astonished his schoolmates, in the Faubourg St. Honoré, by his wish to introduce the boyish games which he had learned during holidays in England ; but he had also astonished the English playfellows who had instructed him, by his previous ignorance of " I spy," prisoner's base, football, and cricket.

In earlier days he had been taught at home, and his pleasures had been pleasures of imagination. At seven years old he was surrounded

by a company of invisible acquaintances, who dwelt in various corners of his father's reception-rooms, and with whom he had frequent and confidential interviews : now beneath the dinner-table, now by the sideboard, now under the friendly roof of his mother's grand piano. He knew their names, and their affairs in detail. It was imagination's earliest movement.

Two years later, when reading was no longer an irksome task, and his pen moved quickly over writing-paper—spelling by sound—he thought his father's books, whose covers he had dared to gaze upon, the most remarkable productions of any that had struck his marvelling and enquiring age. He would write a few lines of childish nonsense on bits of note-paper shaped and folded like a volume ; and on the first page would inscribe some title with which he had grown familiar. Thus were issued to his mother his youthful reproductions of *Oliver Twist*, *Hood's Poems*, and *Tait's Magazine*. Then, when school-days came, with their

allotted task of work, the boy gave up these idle dreams of authorship, and slowly rose from the *Delectus* to *Nepos*, from *Nepos* to *Cæsar*, and so reached the day for opening that page—“*Arma virumque cano*”—which is the gate of Latin poetry.

In later years he mounted, on warm spring mornings, the roof of an early omnibus, and rode from the Faubourg to a spot near the Tour Saint Jacques; where he descended, then crossed the Seine by the Pont Saint Michel, and threading his way through narrow streets, reached the shady lecture-room of the grey Sorbonne. Here, with the youth of the Quartier des Ecoles he sat, note-book and pencil in hand, while a white-haired professor discoursed on Latin history and Greek song; or while a younger man made an exposition of Roman law, with numerous allusions to the events of the day—allusions which were taken up readily and cheered loudly by the mixed crowd of impetuous students, anxious journalists, unoccupied notaries, and indigent philo-

sophers, who longed for a new *régime*. The vision of intellectual life had faded, and its reality had begun.

In leisure hours he strolled before the long range of pictures in the Louvre; gazed with delight upon the groups of Velasquez, the *Psyche* of Gérard, and Rafael's *Virgin with the flowers*; or left the canvases on which the Flemish "genius of evil" wrought out—with strong and gorgeous pencil—his degrading conceptions, to descend to the cool galleries filled with antique sculpture, and reach the place where perfect beauty and perfect power are incarnate in the *Vénus de Milo*. Art, which was a pleasure first, had become an education.

Warner went at first to see the pictures, and then he went to paint from them. Once it had seemed enough to him to notice Titian on the walls, but now it was a keener delight to see glowing upon the canvas, under his own hand, some likeness to the great old master. In technical qualities this was probably poor,

when compared with the productions of copyists who had learned to draw, and who had copied everything and conceived nothing during twenty years. But technical qualities would come later, with systematic study. He longed for them now, and could not wait. Pushed by an irresistible vocation which might have been obeyed afterwards with a less restless haste—had Warner been other than himself—he left the University of Paris without his degree, and exchanged the lecture-rooms of the Sorbonne for the School of Fine Arts.

At the School of Fine Arts his progress was really steady and decided; though in his work there was more of promise than of present achievement. The old doctor began to be disappointed. On remarking his son's ability he had hoped for quicker results. Young Warner, instead of being already the rival of Gérôme or of Frère, was painting with a laborious correctness what some thought cold and others weak. He produced an Ajax, seven feet high; and nobody took much notice of it.

Then he painted a poor domestic scene, which sold at once to an Englishman. His acquaintances were delighted, and said he was on the road to fame. A great painter, who was then the glory of the school of France, and who kept in his old age the passion and enthusiasm of his youth, passed by the work with the comment that it was all the more shameful because it was done so well.

Warner heard of this, and took the hint with the grateful readiness which is rarely wanting to nascent power. Possessed by a masculine love of production, he set himself again a worthier task, and worked at it with a will, but under circumstances which were not quite favourable. He was himself unsettled, restless, fermenting. And the work was done amidst the distractions of society; in the youth of a nature whose impulse was not indeed towards laziness, but towards the excitement of pleasure. One or two critics saw that the picture promised greater things, and said so. But they were few; and, for the most part, they

addressed an unregarding public, occupied with known names.

Then Warner's father died—in fever, caught from a patient. The doctor's wife became ill in nursing him; and, closely watched by her son, she halted for four weeks between life and death—rallying on one day to relapse the next.

At last all was over, and on a January morning, with snow upon the ground, they laid her among the garlands of *immortelles*, the graveyard crosses, and the crowded tombs of Montmartre. Slowly down from the cold hillside, into the bustle of Paris, and to the house that must now be a lonely home, came Paul Warner. He quitted it next day, for Fontainebleau. Anything for distraction, anything for change! The forest that had looked gay in his youth, on summer visits, seemed sombre and significant during his first winter wandering. The outline of the woods stood definite and dark against the yellow sunset sky of early evening. Warner felt the landscape. For the time, his life had ceased to be pleasure.

Then he made a decision which exercised upon his career a momentous influence, for good and evil, and which often in after times he looked back upon with regret. Paris seemed to him unbearable. It was associated, no doubt, with the teaching he had profited by, and the art to which he had devoted himself; but also with the one pure affection of his youth—with his love for the parents who were dead. Its very streets seemed to him the reminding witnesses of a vanished happiness.

So Warner went to London in the spring of 1865; and as the studies he had undertaken were far advanced, nothing occurred immediately to make him question the wisdom of the change. Four months later, still restless and unsettled, he started for Rome, anxious to correct his modern tendency to pettiness by "a long stare at Michael Angelo." In December he came back to London. The friends of his father opened their circle to him, and gradually his own circle widened into the spheres of literature and art.

The next exhibition of the Academy contained a picture which was in part the result of Roman inspiration. But probably it was not severe enough to be unpopular : though the strength was there, men's eyes were taken by what seemed its easy grace. Popular opinion, variable as the wind, set in his favour ; and the artist, bidden to one great house and another, during the season in 1866 and 1867, ran the chance of being spoiled. His work might have deteriorated. His powers might have been relaxed or frittered in the following of society's monotonous routine. But that was not *his* danger ; for the life that he felt and cared for—a life of the intellect, a life of the senses—was almost as distinct from the glitter of fashion as from the dulness of middle-class Philistinism.

Perhaps he would have been more appropriately placed in ancient Athens than in modern London. True, he was modern enough in certain phases of his temperament ; but in others, at least as many, he was removed from the life that was led around

him. He had no love of small proprieties and a conduct of convention. He would have rebelled against puritanical restrictions, and the little *bourgeois* virtues. Keenly sensitive in body and mind, a life without pleasure would have been to him no life at all. With him an evil act was a discord, rather than a sin. He had many regrets, but no remorse. And possibly it was this absence of personal sentiment on the matter of morality—in that word's restricted sense—that made much of the weakness of his character and of the strength of his work. Good and bad were seen by him, expressed by him, with equal power, with equal promptitude. His dramatic sympathy was narrowed by no prejudice. The conduct of his life was regulated by no law.

CHAPTER III.

PAUL WARNER thought no more of the stay-maker of Bond Street. He had seen her safely home; and when they parted the affair was over. It was but an incident in a crowded life.

The idea of a new picture had lately grown upon Warner, and he was preparing to work at it. But there were other occupations, urgent enough for the present. The portrait of a friend who had done him services in London was upon the easel: though Warner did not like the task, he had promised to fulfil it. And it was then the middle of July: people were pressing into the remaining fortnight of the season engagements which should have extended over a month. All day long—at lunch,

tea, dinner, and at midnight—people were “entertaining,” and being “entertained.” It was laborious pastime. Hospitality waxed fast and furious as it drew to its close. Exhausted London was upon the eve of “recruiting” in the country.

The fortnight passed, and another fortnight, too. The House had risen, then; the Park was empty; the clubs were in the hands of painters and decorators; and an August sun smote upon the closed shutters and deserted pavements of Mayfair. Fortunate men were bringing down the grouse upon the moors. Industrious women had found fresh flirting-ground at many an English country-house, or foreign watering-place. But Warner was still in town. He had been asked into Sussex and to the Perthshire Highlands, but invitations had to be declined.

At length, with the end of August, came his hour of release. He was thoroughly weary, and could only allow himself a month's holiday: perhaps scarcely that. The time was too short

to make it worth while to go abroad, beyond Paris; and Paris would have been no change. Where, then, in England should he go? He was familiar with much of London life, but had never had the opportunity of becoming a Cockney. Had the Cockneys no favourite place of recreation where they could be studied by a painter who, in his hours of lassitude, might observe them not without advantage, since Truth as well as Beauty is the aim of art? *Bradshaw* would indicate the way to Margate, and to Margate Warner would go. He wanted not only to be amused with the humours of a crowd: he required fresh air and open sea. Margate had these, and so our unconventional acquaintance departed thither, without thinking it needful to conceal his destination.

The first thing that one does at Margate is to walk upon the jetty which Ingoldsby made famous. The evening of his arrival Warner performed this feat: warily moving amongst the crowd of London tradesmen, London mechanics, shopmen and shopgirls, sailors, and

"little vulgar boys." A refined face, he discovered, was a rarity. His professional studies of City mediocrities out for a holiday would soon become a weariness. But towards the end of the pier a face quite other than the typical face of Margate met his view. It was that of a very young-looking woman, who had been slowly pacing, alone, the extremity of the jetty, and who seemed to Warner to be waiting for some one expected to join her. Now she was still: gazing down at the light dancing waves immediately beneath her, or peering out upon the broad expanse of pearl-grey sea and evening sky, whose restful beauty strangely contrasted with the busy flutter on the pier.

Warner looked at the water, and then at the lonely young woman. What did he see when he approached as closely as was compatible with Margate's code of politeness?—and that is not a severe one. An affluence of pale gold hair falling loose to the waist. A fair white skin, clearly-cut features, and calm grey eyes. When first he saw her it was as if some novice

—pleasant in face and pure in deed—had wandered beyond convent walls, or as if into some Greek girl's statue there had been breathed the breath of life, so that a woman stood before him, still, passionless, and pale as the marble. For she looked to him a quiet-hearted girl, with the world and her unknown life before her, and with little lying behind. Upon her fair unruffled face there seemed no record of a Past. She was as a sleeper but just now awakened.

But whatever may have been the speculations of the rising painter upon the promising-looking subject at the end of the pier, they were interrupted by the arrival of a middle-aged woman who accosted the girl. The girl looked like a lady, but her new companion might reasonably have been taken for a well-to-do Bayswater lodging-house keeper, or the wife of a tradesman in the Borough. How was this?

“Kate's gone straight home, my dear. She was not long over her shoppin'. We must go likewise, I s'pose, as Mr. 'Assell will be wantin' 'is supper. I've pucchassed sausages, my dear.”

"A plebeian beginning!" thought Paul Warner, as he heard the expression of the good woman's wifely solicitude.

"Has Mr. Hassell been indoors all the evening, aunt?"

"Yes. He was fatigued with joggin' over to Broadstairs yesterday. Never mind. He's as 'appy as a prince, with his glass of old ale and his *Lloyd's* newspaper. This 'oliday have done him a precious deal of good . . . Come along, my dear!"

And they departed.

"Is it possible," thought Warner, looking after them, "that a girl so refined and ladylike can walk through a crowd with this stout Juno of the Borough, and not be conscious of the incongruity? Half the little misses of the day would go in fear of their reputation for gentility."

But no such compunction rose in the mind of Madeleine Greyling. She was entirely simple, and wished no one to think of her as other than she was. Of her inexperience she

was just aware. "I have been nowhere and seen nothing," she would sometimes say; never in self-depreciation, but as the calm statement of a fact which there was no reason to suppress. Malicious people said she might have added with equal accuracy, "I have thought nothing, felt nothing, done nothing." But that was surely rather hard upon the owner of so sweet a face—upon the placid possessor of a charm so perfect.

Warner's time hung heavily at Margate, and on the following morning he discovered that it did. He got tired of gazing at the sea and sky. If he sat down he found himself looking at his watch, and in ten minutes he would move off almost involuntarily. He could not bathe all day long. And when he had lunched once he could not lunch again. He had brought no books, for reading would have been no rest to him. At home he was always reading and painting.

At last he bought a shilling Shakspeare, and tired his eyes over the small print, and

thin grey paper. It was, at all events, better than playing pool with the "cads" who congregated in the billiard-room of the hotel. That which he felt the want of was companionship, to make his time of laziness go by without fatigue. He would have welcomed, as a friend and comforter, the dullest man he was accustomed to meet at his club, and observations which must have sounded trite in Piccadilly would have seemed absolutely brilliant at Margate.

Warner resolved upon long walks as the best remedy for weariness. He would visit every day some village that was new to him, and would inspect its church. A church is always interesting. It is the centre of the village life, and when you have seen it the impression of the place itself is somehow better fixed upon your mind. "To-morrow," thought Paul Warner, "my rural visitation shall begin. The month will pass, and I shall have filled a note-book."

Next morning was extremely wet, and the project had to be abandoned—or, at all events,

postponed. Warner spent so dull a forenoon that he went so far as to direct the waiter to bring him *Bradshaw's Guide*, and the departure of a guest from the hotel seemed imminent. But about one o'clock the rain ceased,—though swiftly-driven clouds were dark in the sky—and Warner, who liked to feel the freshness of the air after a summer rainfall, strolled on to the cliff, armed with an umbrella.

Half Margate had turned out for the same purpose, and the streets were full. The painter cast an observant eye upon the crowd, and speedily recognised a face which he had seen before. Two women were just emerging from a shop as Paul Warner passed it. One of them he saw to be the plebeian chaperone of the girl he had noticed on the pier, but on this occasion the girl was not her companion. Nor was the person with her the husband of whose simple and easy happiness Warner had unavoidably heard. Another girl, less a lady than she who had been seen upon the jetty, was the second member of the party. Her face was turned for

an instant to look at some object beyond Warner in the street. He glanced, and recognised at once Kate Lemon.

It was evident, then, that the lady of the pier and the work-girl of Bond Street were in some way connected : at least through the medium of their common chaperone. It was strange ; for the lady looked so thoroughly a lady, the work-girl was confessedly a work-girl, and the companion belonged, quite palpably, to the lower middle class in London. Where was the explanation ? The problem was not an easy one, and it suited the present circumstances of an idle man. "*Cela m'intrigue,*" thought Warner.

Next day he visited a neighbouring village and its church, according to the plan he had designed, and in the evening he walked again upon the pier. There he beheld his casual acquaintance of Bond Street, unaccompanied on this occasion by her mother. The lady was with her instead.

A lounge on the pier at Margate is not

likely to be engrossed with thoughts of surpassing value. Perhaps, too, when a man who lives by intellectual work is out for a holiday, his truest wisdom is to forget that he is wise. Warner, at all events, thought so, and was foolish upon principle.

Therefore it was that from the moment he perceived the little corset-maker he had occupied himself with considering whether or not he should give her the opportunity to recognise him. Against it were the undoubted facts that he had never been presented to her, that she belonged to a "set" very different from his own, and that if any one who knew him noticed the meeting, people would "talk." For it were the facts that he saw no one whom he knew, that at the same time he had no particular objection to people "talking," that the girl who was with Miss Lemon looked as distinctly a lady as he looked a gentleman, that this circumstance roused his curiosity, and in fine that he *preferred* to speak to her.

Kate Lemon was too independent to be

needlessly forward, and she was quite ready to ignore Mr. Warner, if she should see that he wished it. But as, in approaching, he did distinctly look at her, instead of becoming engrossed with anything in the opposite direction, she deemed it civil to nod and smile at him. He stopped to speak.

“My cousin, Miss Greyling : Mr.——”

“Warner,” said that gentleman, taking off his hat to the new acquaintance. “You are not more occupied than the rest of Margate, I suppose ? We are all lazy together here.”

“I generally am,” answered Miss Greyling.

“No, no, Madeleine : you know you ain’t idle,” protested Kate Lemon, “though luckily you haven’t got my work to do.”

“A queen-bee,” said Paul Warner. “Your cousin and I are the working bees. But what do you really do here ?”

“Very little, I’m afraid, but watch the sun-sets and read a novel now and then ; which is terrible waste of time, is it not ?”

Paul Warner smiled, and asked Miss Greyling if she had read George Eliot?

“No.”

“Balzac?”

“No.”

“He is pumping me,” thought Miss Greyling to herself—she had learned that word from Kate. And then she added aloud, as a little explanation, “It so happens that I have not had much opportunity of reading the books which I suppose are good, and what opportunities I have had I have probably neglected—an unpardonable fault, perhaps, in the eyes of a Londoner, who may *write* books for all that I know.”

“He would be the exception if he wrote nothing,” answered Warner. “We all have some kind of thoughts, and most of us like to express them.”

“Then you *do* write?”

“Not I, indeed. Leaving pens and ink to readier hands, I have taken to brushes. I am learning to paint.”

"You take lessons?" said Kate Lemon.
"I thought that was only for boys?"

"We must be middle-aged before we know how to paint,—yes, and how to *draw*. That is what I meant when I said I was learning. It is slow work with us who are not gifted men. . . . But have you been to see the sensation play here?—an affair of greater interest to most people."

"No," said Miss Greyling, looking involuntarily at her black dress. "I suppose when you go in London, you criticise everything?"

"For the papers?"

"No, I was not thinking of that. But Londoners see so much that they must, I should think, criticise more, and, perhaps, enjoy less than we do."

"The very reverse, as to myself. I assure you I go to the theatre, *comme le premier bourgeois venu*, to see pretty actresses, and prettier scenery, to laugh a little if comic things *are* said, to be touched to the heart should the opportunity offer, and to drop a tear when necessary."

"It's very seldom that I go," said Kate Lemon. "When I do, I like to be amused; not made to cry."

"And I never go at all," confessed Miss Greyling. "Look at that sunset,—do!"

"How very fond she is of light and colour!" thought Paul Warner. "Such a genuine admiration, too! It's quite refreshing after the common pretence of admiring scenery. So few women really care for it."

He took the subject up, and asked Miss Greyling: "How is it so few women care about scenery? I am sure *you* do."

"Yes; *very* much."

"Well, how is it you are an exception? Miss Lemon, can you explain?"

"I never thought about it," answered that young person, who was watching intently the dragging of a boat upon the shore.

Warner from that moment addressed himself to Madeleine.

"I have heard a friend of mine give an explanation, and as you are quite apart from

the mass of ladies in this respect, I may repeat it without fear of being rude. He says that women are the realists, men the idealists, in this world. 'Tis the young men who write verses and live in the seventh Heaven of the imagination: the young women occupy themselves with bonnets, and *if* they dream, they dream of balls. For a long time he wondered what could be the cause of this—wondered why men are imaginative and women materialist. At last he remembered that Woman is herself Poetry personified, and that therefore she suggests to Man the poetical ideas of which she is scarcely ever conscious."

Warner looked at Miss Greyling, and thought she understood.

"I love scenery," she said, thinking she must say something; "but I never considered about it in that way. Up in the north, on the Cleveland Hills, I could look at it for ever."

The answer was characteristic, though Warner did not know it. Hers was a brooding nature. She had scarcely any definiteness or

sharpness of conception. She reasoned little, and felt much.

But this girl noticed the smaller beauties of an every-day landscape; for though not quick, she had the great gift of receptiveness. She loved the wild scenery of coast, and hill, and moorland, with the intensity of an imaginative nature; but the sensitiveness of her mind, the fineness of her spirit, made her value a simplicity of beauty unregarded by the crowd. If she had felt and remembered from her early childhood what is to some the almost inspiring influence of her northern hills—where grey rock pierces through purple heather, and limestone boulders lie scattered over a world of moor—she felt also the tranquil brightness of green cow-pastures in the freshness of morning, and grew graver before the quietest of sunset skies.

CHAPTER IV.

THE problem of the apparent difference in the position of these two girls who were companions at Margate was a very simple one, though Warner did not know it.

Madeleine Greyling was the daughter of a naval officer who had married beneath him. His family had never forgiven the wrong he had done them by "importuning with love, in honourable fashion," a young woman who ought surely to have become anything rather than a *relative* of theirs. The writer has not been able to discover how it was that Archibald Greyling met with Harriet Moggridge—the daughter of a cheesemonger in Lambeth—in days before idle young officers and the daughters of tradespeople danced together at the North

Woolwich Gardens. But the meeting somehow took place, and a secret marriage quickly followed it. Greyling went to sea : having settled his wife in a pretty little cottage on the East Cliff at Folkestone. There she remained alone.

When he returned, the probability of a child's birth led him to think it best to tell his family of the marriage. The couple journeyed to Yorkshire ; and when the husband broke the news to his remaining friends, the result was not that which he had anticipated. He was thenceforth in disgrace.

A month after they arrived in the north, Madeleine was born : in a grey stone cottage, near the foot of Danby Moor, in Eskdale. She passed her early childhood there, and there, when she was ten years old, her mother died. Then her father brought her to the south. He had a fancy to see again the seaport town where the first months of his married life had been passed : so they returned to Folkestone. Lieutenant Greyling left the service, and

devoted himself to his child. At Folkestone, only five or six months before there occurred the incidents of the last chapter, he had died. His daughter was just past one-and-twenty, and she was quite alone.

The only sister of Harriet Moggridge had also married ; but instead of marrying out of her station, she had remained in it. She was first the wife of one Lemon : a linen-draper's shop-walker in the Borough ; and Kate was the child of their union. A railway accident bereaved her of her husband, and two years afterwards—when Kate was fourteen—Mrs. Lemon sought consolation in marriage with a childless widower, named Hassell ; who was a saddler at Notting Hill. But enough, for the present, of family histories.

When Warner bade his sea-side friends good evening, he said he hoped that he and they might “fall in” with each other again. Next morning he took proper precautions to

secure the realization of his hope, by remaining in the part of Margate in which they lodged, and accordingly he did "fall in" with them during the forenoon.

Kate Lemon expected it—knowing something of the ways of masculine humanity—but to Madeleine Greyling it was a surprise. "How has he happened to come upon us again? So soon too!" she asked herself in thought, as he stood, smiling his pleasure at the meeting.

His was a striking face, undoubtedly, and Madeleine knew it to be so, and looked at it, when unobserved, with something of that naïveté of admiration with which Miranda gazed on Ferdinand.

I might call him
A thing divine, for nothing natural
I ever saw so noble.

That, of course, was but the result of the girl's untutored thought, of her extreme simplicity, and of her little knowledge. But Warner's *was* an unusual countenance, and its

manly beauty was heightened by contrast with the commoner faces around. A figure of the middle height, erect, slight, and lithe—conspicuous neither for the muscle of an athlete nor for the flabbiness of a recluse—offered nothing to attract attention from the well-shaped head with its short dark brown curls matting the forehead. The full grey eyes, under dark lashes, the massive brows, the aquiline nose, the firmly set yet plastic mouth, were sure to be remarked; and no muddiness or redness or paleness of complexion spoilt a fine living picture. Warner's skin was smooth and soft: of a lustrous healthy olive-brown. He had its warmth of beauty from his mother, who was born at Angoulême, and reared in a bountiful land, nearer the sun than England.

Commonplace women vaguely called him "handsome;" but he was more than that, for an ever-changing expression, thoughtful or vivacious, played on features which of themselves were noticeable. When he slouched

about the country in a shabby hat and loose old jacket, working-people saw at once that he was a gentleman, and treated him with the respect not bought with money ; and in London society prudent mammas were wont to withdraw their daughters from him—as from a younger son—until they were told that his talent was recognised, and that he had a future.

Of course he was not an Adonis for whom Venus would vainly have sighed ; but there was in his look and bearing all that was required to prepossess a simple girl like Madeleine, who was accustomed to think well of every one, who had no thought and no ambition to see “a goodlier man,” and who was likely enough to believe, on innocently admiring such superficial graces,

There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple :
If the ill spirit have so fair a house,
Good things will strive to dwell with't.”

Warner, for his part, was struck by the young woman's simplicity of beauty, and by

her inborn grace and ease of manner—an ease as far removed from the artificial coolness of some amongst society's idols as from the flippant self-confidence of second-rate actresses. He thought, besides, that he saw in her many virtues that were strange to him: unobtrusive cheerfulness and a passionate love of Nature, as well as the germs of a capacity to appreciate the things which made his own life worth the living.

Thus it was that a few meetings and seaside talks—from which Kate Lemon prudently escaped—established just sufficient friendship between the two to make still further intimacy a difficult thing to resist. Warner ceased to find Margate so insufferably dull, and accordingly gave up his visits to the neighbouring villages and churches; and with these excursions, the architectural studies which were their professed object. Out-of-doors during the genial days of autumn he read to Miss Greyling from the *Idylls of the King* and from *Adam Bede*, or talked to

her of foreign cities and varied scenes of travel. These things, the record of his own experience, charmed her, as a fairy tale charms children with its strange novel wonders. And he was pleased to please her.

CHAPTER V.

A WEEK or so before the end of September, Madeleine left Margate. The aunt with whom she had been staying went back with her husband and Kate Lemon to Notting Hill. The Folkestone cottage was to be occupied another month, after which Madeleine would probably move to London, where she might live near her mother's relatives. Mr. and Mrs. Hassell were certainly not very delightful associates ; but Madeleine's connection was small, and her choice, if she *had* a choice, very limited. There would, at all events, be Kate Lemon, who was young, kind-hearted, bright, and lively. Yet to the pleasure of that intercourse there would be one drawback—the want of complete sympathy between a woman who

possesses a lady's sensitiveness, and a woman who is supposed to be without it. This is a want which, in intimate association, must always be felt to exist, even when, as in this case, there is no pride upon the one side and no restraint upon the other. It is felt, of course, in the little things of daily life : not in the supreme moments when all humanity is one.

When Madeleine left Margate, Margate became dull to the person with whom this history is chiefly concerned. But he was free to leave it, and he used his freedom.

Madeleine had exercised over Warner a singular fascination, and had done so through qualities which not every man would have been able to appreciate. A countryman, unaccustomed to society and ignorant of women, would not have perceived the simplicity and the freshness which were among the most potent of her charms. A Londoner, with no ideal beyond a larger establishment and successful competition with his fellows, would have seen the qualities, but would not have seen that

they were charms at all. Another, of *blasé* life and vitiated tastes, would have thought the girl colourless and tame. Warner thought differently. Sufficiently acquainted with women to assign to beauty—in a life-long connection—no more than its proper value, he had not, at six-and-twenty, decided that all was vanity, and was willing to let romance play some part in his career.

Moved at intervals by aspirations pure and high, Warner could respect simplicity of character apart from intellectual attainments. Idealist, by reason of his temperament, the moment he perceived one virtue very clearly he assumed the existence of the rest.

Thus it was that a few weeks' acquaintance with Madeleine Greyling sufficed to turn a casual admirer into a serious lover; and did so, too, in such a way that had Paul Warner been asked by any prudent friend to show some cause for his faith concerning her he could have established—at least, to his own satisfaction—that it was perfectly reasonable, and, indeed,

that judgment even more than inclination was prompting his advances.

He became before long a most credulous admirer of Miss Greyling, and laboured under the impression that the world had never looked upon her like before. He followed her to Folkestone, and while she lived in the little cottage on the East Hill, he established himself in comfortable quarters at the Pavilion Hotel. We have heard that he did not care in the least for conventionality, but he did care for comfort. Deference to the one is generally united with love of the other; but with Warner it was not so. He was very regardless of what people said, and the shafts of scandal fell harmlessly upon the armour of his self-content. They were impalpable, untangible. But he was keenly alive to that which is positive, and the vivid interest that he took in intellectual things did not lessen his liking for well-cooked meats and claret with a bouquet; for soft sleeping and the wearing of fine linen.

Even Love did nothing to spoil his appetite.

When after a sea-side stroll in the long warm twilight of a September evening, Madeleine—escorted to the gate by her lover—had returned to the cottage, to brood fasting over the two hours' talk, Warner would trot briskly down to the Pavilion, eat heartily at the *table-d'hôte*, and gaily discuss the most recent phase of the Parisian politics with the man who had last crossed from Boulogne. In fact he did ample justice to M. Doridant's not quite unremunerated hospitality.

Yet there was much romance in those Folkestone days, and our friend laid in with a lover's willing industry a sufficient store of illusions. One night, when Madeleine had seemed more than usually interested in his affairs and more than usually prodigal of her girlish tenderness, he was in ecstasies over his prize.

"You *are* charming—admirable—perfect!" he exclaimed.

She looked up at him with a sweet sober face, and answered quite gravely, "O! no.

I am only a simple little girl, who loves you *very* much."

He began to see, before he had known her long, something of the truth of her answer. But not all of it. Full comprehension was reserved for other times. When we think we understand human character the most we often understand it the least. Fancy outruns knowledge; men's minds being speculative. Give us a few salient traits and it is not difficult for us to make the facts accord with our own theory. We congratulate ourselves on an harmonious whole. But a new light, a small event—a minute's observation, or the deductions of a friend—and the harmony in our conception is turned into a discord. It takes a long lifetime for men to understand their parents and their children. Generally men die without having understood them.

CHAPTER VI.

*Bernard Vipán to Arthur Ringley.**

“Biarritz, October 15, 1867.

“DEAR RINGLEY,—

“YOU know that I am a man of few words, but not devoid of curiosity. This is my holiday, and, having no business of my own to which to attend, my active mind occupies itself with that of other people.

“What is this about Paul Warner, told me by Wilfrid Harris and his wife, who spent a day or two here last week? They were gradually making their way back to London from the Pyrenees. Mrs. Harris received what

* A scholar follows in the steps of his great masters, and does what has been done before by Balzac and by Thackeray. Two or three persons who have appeared in a previous work are here again introduced. But this is in all respects a separate history, and no one is in any way obliged to read *The Two Lives of Wilfrid Harris*.—F. W.

she said was a gossiping note from a friend, and it contained the news. Warner, they say, is going to marry.

“You will know more of it—being probably the gossiping correspondent—and can spare time to tell an exile from London. Whom is he going to marry? And, without the slightest desire to interfere in his private arrangements, let me add, why is he going to marry at all?”

“All you literary fellows say that he has what you call ‘a future;’ by which you don’t mean, I suppose, as the French do, an intended wife (pardon this pun: it is a very good one), but a career. You all say he bids fair to be successful.

“Then why marry? Do you think it is for money? If so, there may be a certain amount of sense in it, though I don’t suppose he is very poor. If it be for blood, he does a good thing, for undoubtedly he wants family connection to give him a position in society. Should he become the husband of a lady in her own right, he will be amply justified in doubling the

price of his works. But Harris understood that the girl is obscure—said he had never heard of the family. Is it for beauty then, after all, to exhaust the list of conceivable reasons? If so, what a consummate fool! *Marry* a poor beauty of inferior position! Is it not enough to flirt with her?

“Some day, I suppose, I shall go through matrimony myself—in a dozen years’ time, if Fates are kind. But no damsel in distress for me! A Vipian does not go into the City for nothing, and I am the first Vipian who has gone there at all; and if I don’t come out of it rich enough to buy back the estates in Northamptonshire, I shall deserve to be shot. As soon as I can redeem the estates, I shall, of course, leave the City. Then I suppose I ought to marry—to have an heir.

“Warner may throw himself away prematurely; and, as his friends consider him a man of genius, one must expect that he will play the fool. But you don’t catch *me* doing that sort of thing, as long as Paper Court remains on the

right side of Broad Street, and my sister's husband (the banker) will lend me a hand to make the City and its snobs serve my purpose. (Julia married for the benefit of the family, and deserves our gratitude.)

"You have been, no doubt, on your usual round of the musical festivals, in the interest of the *Morning Press*. I make a point of never looking at a paper here, or should have read your account; but the temptation to turn to the share list is always so strong, and this is my holiday.

"I hope you enjoyed your little tour before the festivals. Perhaps I, too, should have done well to take Scotland in August, instead of Biarritz later in the year. The weather is charming; but the best people seem to have gone; and the English poor, who go to places out of the season, will soon be arriving.

"Yours very truly,

"BERNARD VIPAN."

Arthur Ringley to Bernard Vipán.

"Stanley Street, S. W., 18th Oct., '67.

"DEAR VIPAN,—

"THE dull season allows me time to answer your note, and to tell you that I know next to nothing. I wondered, at first, why you cared to ask for particulars; but as drowning men catch at straws, so do idle men catch at rumours.

"Warner is doing a foolish thing, so far as I understand it; but it is not so difficult a thing as you seem to fancy to determine what induces him to do it. You do not exhaust the list of 'conceivable reasons' for marriage when you mention the mere possession of money, position, or beauty. Men still *love* women now and then: desperately, too. ('It does seem odd,' I hear you say.) I imagine this to be the case with Warner, as I am told of no outward advantage.

"If you ever try to analyze character, and think of Warner with any care, you will probably come to the conclusion that he is making a mistake. Warner's love is too likely

to clash with his work. He is a very clever man, and might do much,—far cleverer than you would gather from his conversation, which often disappoints. But you have seen his pictures. If his love affairs broke in upon his work it would be the worse for us, who are not overdone with rising draughtsmen or colourists.

“ But in the long run I should not be afraid of that, in his case. He is too much in his heart of hearts an artist to give permanent place to any feeling that would interfere with his work. Of course, ‘capacity for joy admits temptation,’ and Warner is alive to pleasure, as every artist—whether painter, writer, actor, or musician—*must* be. Pleasure is at the bottom of this new connection ; but will the love last, I wonder ? Some woman said or wrote that women’s influence over men is greater than the influence of priests, because they hold men by their pleasures, while priests hold them only by their duties. But it seems to me that the sense of a vocation would be a still stronger influence. That is a sense of which Warner

may be unconscious, but I believe it exists in him ; and, should it ever clash with the love affair, so much the worse for his happiness—not to speak of his wife's.

“ Harris, who returned yesterday, was talking about it with me, and I suppose our talk has led me into this ridiculous exposition, which has little to do with your question. Let it go, however, for what it is worth. It may not come amiss to an idle man.

“ Now for the facts—the one or two I am possessed of. The lady's name is Greyling, and she is the daughter of a man who belonged to a north country family, and made a *mésalliance* with a pretty Cockney a score of years ago, or thereabouts. She was never in society, they say ; but she is still quite young, pretty, and poor.

“ He might have had a Miss Portrush. She remains for you, you see ; but will not wait your dozen years, I fear.

“ Yours truly,

“ ARTHUR RINGLEY.”

“And what made you discuss the question in this fashion, and bring your letters here to read to me?” said Wilfrid Harris, as the musical critic sat in the blind author’s study.

“Soon told,” said Ringley. “You know who this man Vipán is?”

“Nothing whatever of his connections, if that is what you mean.”

“You remember, my dear fellow, that three years ago you went with me to dine at a house in Lowndes Square?”

“The Millingtons. Yes.”

“Well, there were two girls there: Henry Millington’s cousins: nieces, therefore, of Lord Wynne.”

“You mean girls who had just left school—a finishing school in Paris?”

“Exactly. This man is their brother, and I can tell you what caused his curiosity to know about Paul Warner’s marriage.”

“What, then?”

“The elder girl, who must be one-and-twenty now, was much *éprise* with him last

season ; and Vipan, who, to do him justice, believes in brains as he does in a good family, would have said nothing disagreeable if an engagement had been made."

"Quite exceptional enlightenment!" said Wilfrid Harris.

"I wish to show him that Warner's wife should be an uncommon woman. Now Vipan's sister is polished mediocrity : as commonplace at bottom as I suppose Miss Greyling is."

"So you have tried to console him," Harris said.

"Yes."

"Then drop the letter in the pillar-box, and may it carry balm to Biarritz."

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN it was time for Paul Warner to go back to London, he saw no use in Madeleine's remaining at Folkestone. Besides, under any circumstances, she would have been obliged to leave the cottage. Though the rent was low, food was dear at Folkestone; and the expenses of the little household were more than Miss Greyling could defray:

Her father had possessed, in addition to his insignificant pension, legacies that had been left to him when a youth. They amounted to scarcely more than three thousand pounds, and this was Madeleine's entire fortune. It was about a hundred a year in the Three per Cents., and in the Three per Cents. the money had been invested in her name by Lieutenant

Greyling, during his last illness. It was therefore a present during life-time, and not a bequest. And it was settled upon her. Words enough, the reader may think, about a sum so trifling; but, he should remember, it was only this slender portion that stood between Madeleine and the door of the poor-house.

Her betrothal to Paul Warner had changed her prospects, and made her plans the subject of many talks, of which this that follows was almost the last. The two were strolling on the cliffs, between the Dover road and the sea.

"You had better come to Town," said the lover. "If you stayed here, and I arranged to give up work till our marriage, and be constantly in the place, it would still be dull for you."

"Would it, do you think?"

"Indeed it would; and far from beneficial, too."

"Why, what do I want? You know, Paul, I have so little to care for, except you. What-

ever I do, and wherever I go or stay, promise to care for me. You have so many things to think about; and I have so few."

"Nonsense, Maddy: we think of the same things."

"Ah! but—I mean that your life, from all you have told me, seems so full. Why did you want me? That is what I cannot imagine. Mine is so very empty. . . . Promise sometimes to think of me, if only a little. I shall always have time enough for thinking of *you*. Promise!"

"To think of you at all times. Yes. Much need I have to make such a vow, little Madeleine! But now for serious talk and planning. . . . There are a dozen reasons why you should go to Town: besides, I thought that had always been settled. Here you would brood too much over your father's death. I know you would. At Margate you could throw it off; but if you were left alone here, it would come back to you; and hearing from me every day, you would still feel lonely. Besides, you

could not stay here. Who cares for the old housekeeper-servant! I am sure *you* don't."

"She wants to leave me."

"*Parfaitement!* That is what I say. One reads in novels of old housekeepers who take a profound interest in orphan children of the house. The sort of woman, you know, who plays second mother to the young lady—something better than a step-mother, too—watches over her little love-affair, and, dying, leaves her her savings. Savings, recollect, which may be a pretty penny by that time. People don't understand compound interest, as Balzac said, when it was urged that there were 'too many millions' in *Eugénie Grandet*. But your Mrs. Busby does not allow herself the luxury of affection, or else she has not chosen to bestow that affection upon you. Let her go where she will."

"She will go into Essex, where she has a brother and sister. Nothing seems to me more natural, Paul, than that she should wish to join them."

“But now about you, since we have disposed of Mistress Busby. I know a lady at Kensington who would receive you, or rather, I know *of* her. Miss Markham keeps a small ‘finishing school’—don’t be frightened—and sometimes she takes into her house a lady who prefers this to a boarding-house, or who perhaps wishes to pursue some particular study on her own account. I know this from an unhappy fellow who gives the girls drawing-lessons. The place has a very good reputation. You might stay there very well until we marry, I should think; and I don’t see why that need be many months. Meanwhile you might be glad to occupy yourself with books and music; and in the circumstances under which you would go there you would in no way be kept out of society. In fact, Maddy, you would have more than you could have at Folkestone.”

“I think it would be very pleasant. And you would come and see me?”

“Why, of course. Do you think I could keep away?”

" I *hope* not. But, Paul, what would it cost—my staying at this house ? "

" You practical young woman ! I have not the faintest idea. But it certainly would not be ruinous. Going as you would go, it might perhaps be at the rate of a couple of hundreds a year, and I think it must be worth that, if the house be a good one, and Miss Markham really a sensible woman . . . But what do I know about terms and schoolmistresses ! I never kept a ladies'-school."

" I could never afford so much as two hundred a year. It would be out of the question."

" O ! yes, you could, for I could, and that is the same thing. For the present this is all supposition ; but assuming our guess to be about correct, what money you might want, I could easily advance. That is a matter of course."

Many a girl would have hesitated to accept, and few of those who would not have hesitated would have been worthy of the offer. With Madeleine Greyling it was quite otherwise.

She was not selfish enough to snatch at a benefit, and at the same time she was too simple to think of refusing it. Impulsive gratitude was in her tones when she answered.

"It would only be another kindness. Yes, I accept. And, Paul, you know, you *do* know, how I want some day to repay you. I shall never do that, perhaps—perhaps *never*."

"Because there is nothing whatever to repay."

"There is—much. I will try to be so good a wife to you. I pray to God, every night, that I may be. O! you don't know how earnestly. . . . *Bless* you, Paul!"

"The gate, and Mrs. Busby holding it open. That woman pries. . . . Good night, little friend."

"Good night. To-morrow."

The servant vanished, and Warner began to walk away. But he turned for a last look at the slight girlish figure leaning over the low cottage-gate: at the anxious eyes that followed his steps into the distance and the dusk.

CHAPTER VIII.

It rested with Paul Warner to make the arrangements for Madeleine's sojourn at Kensington, and as he generally decided quickly, the arrangements were promptly made. Miss Markham was of a very modern type of schoolmistress, and she showed this to Warner during their first interview.

"I understand that Miss Greyling is the daughter of a naval officer. Our drawing-master, Mr. Bick, gave me all the particulars I need know. His mention of you amply sufficed, Mr. Warner. The time has gone by in which social position was the first consideration; and talent's turn is come round. A recommendation from Mr. Bick is an 'Open, Sesame.'

Do you not agree with me that he is excessively clever?"

"I think him a promising fellow."

"It is a mystery to me that he has not yet been elected to the Society of Water Colour Painters. Still, I daresay talent yet meets with difficulties, and may continue to do so. In this respect we who teach have a great responsibility laid upon us. Girls come to us respecting money more than ability, and caring far more for horses and carriages than for Literature and Art."

"All the world does," said Paul Warner.

"Are you not ungrateful to say so, when your own pictures have been so much praised?—though I admit not praised enough. It is a strange infatuation, and I do my best to destroy it in my pupils."

"A worthy mission, Miss Markham, but a difficult one."

"In the time that is coming people will be obliged to care for intellectual pursuits—positively compelled to. This is what I endeavour

to instil into the minds of my girls. I tell them that they *must* be accomplished gentlewomen. To this end, Mr. Warner, we do not neglect any portion of a liberal education. Mr. Rothkopf, who is one of the assistants of Professor—dear me! I forget his name—at the Royal Institution, gives private lectures here, and they prove, I assure you, very instructive. He has lately been telling us all about the sources of heat—friction, percussion, chemical action, etc. Last summer he was really entertaining when lecturing on the Chemistry of Common Life. He spoke, you know, of the air we breathe, and told us that a diamond, burnt in oxygen, combines with it, and produces carbonic acid gas: thus proving that the diamond is carbon, or charcoal. And the only reason why we cannot actually manufacture diamonds in this way is, that we know of no liquid that will dissolve charcoal, as tea will dissolve sugar. That, I think, is the most extraordinary fact he mentioned. My girls considered it exceedingly provoking.”

“But you are not so severe as to be wholly scientific?” said Mr. Warner.

“Certainly not. I aim, though very ineffectually, at completeness of culture; and we would fain live in Mr. Arnold’s atmosphere of sweetness and light. With this in view, I am myself in the habit of delivering brief lectures to my pupils on the poetry of the present century; and we have already considered Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Tennyson. I shall feel compelled to avoid Mr. Swinburne, though it will be with genuine reluctance, as with his aspirations towards political liberty I do completely sympathise.”

“You set yourself no easy task.”

“I am thankful to say I have energy. Besides, I am not alone. Every Monday morning, young Mr. Burlingham Drane—who contributes, as you know, to our best reviews—gives us an hour’s lecture on some great episode or character in history: putting us all to rights as to the facts of the case. Previous generations appeared to have arrived at such

totally wrong conclusions respecting almost every historical character and event."

"Just so. Heaven grant we may be right ourselves!"

"For my part, I think we should utilize our advantages. One is glad to learn from Carlyle that Cromwell was an enlightened patriot; from Froude, that Henry the Eighth was really a most amiable character; from Hepworth Dixon, that the great Bacon was entirely trustworthy. One is sorry to gather from Macaulay that Penn was far otherwise, but one is bound to believe it, I suppose."

"I'm not prepared to say," observed Warner, a little frightened, "that Miss Greyling would wish to pursue a regular course of study. She might, perhaps, take up one subject: not several."

"She would be perfectly free to attend what lectures she chose; and the terms I mentioned to you, in writing, would allow of her availing herself of such facilities as the house affords for the study of French and

German. Miss Pigalle—‘Mademoiselle’ we call her—is not at all an ordinary French governess: on the contrary, she is a most superior person. Her father, M. Pigalle, formerly held a chair at the Collège de France. You are no doubt aware of the circumstances under which he was suspended or dismissed—I forget which—but it was one of the most arbitrary acts of that despotic government; for what did he do but give honest utterance to his convictions!”

But as Mr. Warner had not gone down to Kensington to discuss French politics, he did not encourage Miss Markham to pursue the subject. He confined himself to a few questions which seemed necessary, and, on departing, arranged for the reception of Madeleine in a week from that day.

“I am not quite sure,” thought Warner, when, having left the house, he walked briskly up the Kensington High Street, on his way to Hanover Square, “that I should consider that woman a particularly charming companion.

But what in the world is Madeleine to do! Until we marry she will be better off here than by herself, and better off than if she were to stay with the pretty little cousin and her worthy friends at Notting Hill. *Du reste*, Miss Markham, though somewhat of a bore, is not unladylike, nor unkind, nor dishonest; and a little of the atmosphere of work will do Madeleine no harm. On the whole, what else could I have decided?"

Getting back to Hanover Square he seated himself in the writing-room of his club, and rapidly indited the following epistle:—

“ *Monday afternoon.*

“ DEAREST MADDY,

“ HERE is a hurried line to save the country post, and tell you that I have just called at Miss Markham’s, and arranged for your reception this day week. I wish to keep fat Mrs. Hassell, of Notting Hill, out of the matter altogether; so I have determined to take you to Kensington myself, and shall meet

at Charing Cross whatever train from Folkestone you may choose to travel by.

“ A pleasant room will be reserved for you, looking out upon Holland Park. The house is an old red brick building, of George the First’s day, I imagine. You will like it for its quaintness.

“ What can I say of Miss Markham? I do not wish you to anticipate too much. Neither on first acquaintance nor at any time can she care for you as I do. You won’t expect to find her more than a well-disposed person, whose house will be, I hope, an endurable abode until we have a home together—you and I, Madeleine.

“ No time to-day for a word about my picture.

“ Yours always,

“ P. W.”

CHAPTER IX.

IT was not with pleasure that Madeleine looked forward to taking up her abode with Miss Markham and a dozen strangers at Kensington. She was quiet and very sensitive, and would gladly have been spared this new experience as the last of her maidenhood. So at all events she thought, on meditating upon it during the final days at Folkestone. When Warner had proposed it, she had been very willing; and now that the lapse of weeks had somewhat changed her inclination, it had not changed her resolve.

“I suppose,” thought Madeleine, often and often during the last hours in the cottage home, “that it must do me good to go there, and, if so, it must do *him* good also, since we are so

soon to live together. Why should I trouble him by saying I am half-afraid, when he knows better about it all, and is wiser, and loves me ? ”

So she kept her fears to herself, and when at Charing Cross she met Paul Warner, the pleasure of the meeting threw into the unregarded background her immediate installation at Miss Markham's. There were future meetings, too, to talk about, and there were many things to be said during the half hour's drive through the foggy streets on a November morning.

“ Miss Greyling ! ” said one of the Kensington pupils, to her companions, as the carriage drew up at the door, in the interval between the departure of the drawing-master and the arrival of Mr. Rothkopf, the lecturer on science. (This was an interval which the girls employed in standing within view of the window, to chat together, and criticize the passers-by. They called that point of view “ the Ladies' Club. ”)

“ Nothing ever happens here, ” continued

the damsel who had already spoken, "or I assure you I should not have been at the trouble of announcing the appearance of this phenomenon."

"What is she like, Isabel?" asked another young lady, who was ransacking a bookcase. "And has she come in a brougham?"

"She has come in a brougham, and she is like no one that I ever saw. Her veil is up, and she is—no—yes, she is—quite a pretty girl, I declare."

"Light?"

"Say 'blonde:' it sounds better. Yes, she is. And with lots of golden hair, which is no more hers, I will bet you a pair of gloves, than mine is mine."

"What! you buy your man-traps, Isabel," laughed the other. "Are they set for Mr. Rothkopf, pray? Why, my dear, he might as well fall in love with Isidore's shop-window!"

"You forget that Isidore's wigs have no eyes underneath them, and that my hair *has*, Miss Impertinence. Besides, I call Mr. Roth-

kopf exceedingly good practice, and I mean to flirt with him as long as Miss Markham omits to notice it. Or, till somebody cuts me out."

"He's not very young, and not very handsome."

"Granted. 'And he blushes so,' I suppose you meant to add. Well, what of that? He is a man, and will do until I can get a better. Oh, these long, long school-days! But I shall come out next season."

"A truce to all the parties you are going to!" broke in a third pupil. "Tell us more about this new importation. Is she a jolly-looking girl? Have they come into the house together?"

"Long ago. That was her lover with her. I am sure I have met him in Kensington Gardens. He looks about seven-and-twenty. But why don't he grow little whiskers?—they would suit him better than those bare cheeks."

"Profound connoisseur!" ejaculated May Winstone, who had spoken second.

"I ought to be, Miss Impertinence," replied

Isabel. "You know very well that I have four brothers — you've seen their photos — eleven cousins, and, in the holidays, an increasing contingent of admirers unattached."

"Your name's 'Isabel,' and upon my word you ought to be the *bouquetière* at the Jockey Club. Can't somebody propose you for that office?"

"Hush! I can stand chaff, but not impudence. Hand me *Macmillan*, that I may look over Professor Huxley's article, which I am sure Miss Markham don't understand, though she told me to read it. . . . Well, I suppose it is time I atoned for my levity."

Meanwhile, in the drawing-room, Warner had introduced Madeleine to Miss Markham. Madeleine had said little, and Warner thought it was time for him to leave.

"We shall see you often," said Miss Markham, as they shook hands at the drawing-room door. "I need hardly ask you."

Warner bowed.

"By-the-by, we give a little amateur concert

—amongst the girls, you understand—this day three weeks : before separating for the recess—a recess which I hope Miss Greyling will not find too dull here, with me alone. A few relatives of my pupils will be the only audience on Wednesday the 14th, and I should be delighted if Miss Greyling's friend would join us."

"Only too happy."

"We count on you then, Mr. Warner. *Prenez garde de*—I beg your pardon—take care not to fall, I mean. That step is deceptive : these old houses, you know—but I might have continued in French, as you are half a Frenchman. We never speak English among ourselves ; though, as I think I said, we pay unusual attention to our English literature. . . . Professor Rothkopf's knock, Susan. Show him into the library, and inform the young ladies at once, or Signor Carabini will be here before the lecture is over."

CHAPTER X.

THERE could not have been a greater change for Madeleine Greyling than that which she experienced in leaving the slumberous life of the Folkestone cottage, for the house at Kensington—with its bustling mistress, and its troop of occupied young ladies busily engaged in acquiring information and knowledge of languages and literature, science and music. There was much to be learnt, undoubtedly, at Miss Markham's finishing school; but little that could be learnt pleausurably, by one who was new to the atmosphere of intellectual work. Warner, of course, had not been foolish enough to propose that Madeleine should be a pupil like the rest, since it seemed only natural that work under compulsion should disincline her for work of any

sort. But even under the arrangements he had made, there was little or nothing that could render work attractive.

The whole tone of the place jarred upon Madeleine. She perceived, indeed, how unlike had been, in the first Folkestone days, Paul Warner's strong and vivid interest in things of which she knew nothing, to the rapid flippant way in which young ladies, on the eve of "coming out," discussed questions that were grave, and made light of subjects that were difficult. Girls, who had never cherished any serious thought, disposed of momentous questions with the easy assurance of youth, though without its healthy and atoning enthusiasm, and so passed quickly on to the babble of the boudoir—the second-hand scandals which society had dropped, like crumbs from its feast of slander.

Madeleine was an object of interest to the pupils, for two very excellent reasons. In the first place, because she was not a pupil herself; and in the second, because she was going to be

married. But between her and the accomplished young ladies there was little fellow-feeling. Madeleine, by reason of her secluded life at Folkestone, was less of a woman in mind than many of them, but more of a woman at heart. They saw the points in which they were her superiors : not the points in which they were below her.

Miss Markham was courteous and kind, but she did not at all understand her. For the schoolmistress—with artificial interest in the things of the intellect, constantly displayed before her pupils—found it hard to comprehend a character simpler than her own. Like the Spirit in *Faust*, she understood that only which she resembled, and had never one spark of the sympathy with various natures and different temperaments which in its fulness constitutes the gift of genius and is the source of all dramatic power.

So Madeleine had weary days, and never told Paul Warner of her discouragements. But he soon suspected them, and said to her—on a

December evening, in the quiet drawing-room in which Miss Markham had left the lovers alone—

“Maddy, the best thing you and I can do is to be married before the beginning of the spring.”

“Why?”

“Because I know that you are not happy here, in your immediate surroundings.”

“Every one is kind to me. At least, no one is unkind.”

“That may be; but no one understands you. I do not mean that you are the ‘great soul, misunderstood,’ of morbid poetry and fiction—destined to be never known or appreciated—for I believe I thoroughly understand you myself.”

“Yes, Paul, you *do* know me.”

“But I mean, Maddy dear,”—he kissed her with protecting gentleness—“that this is not your element: that you would be far happier in your own house, with your own husband.”

“I want to help you, and to be a really useful wife to you, Paul; so that you shall

never have to be sorry for the day we first met. And I know I am not fit to marry you now."

"Silly little Madeleine! What in the world can you mean?"

Poor woman-child! She placed her elbows on her knees, and bent forward so that her face might rest upon her hands that clasped it, and then reflected on the scanty list of her attainments—on her utter ignorance of the painter's art to which Paul Warner was devoted.

"I can't tell you, Paul. Go away for to-night. Please do! Someday I shall be able, perhaps, to explain myself better."

He rose obediently to go.

"Think over it, Maddy dear. Perhaps you will see that my proposal is a good one, and that we should really do well to be married without any unnecessary delay. Now good-night. You must be better in the morning."

He kissed her again.

"Good night, Paul. . . . Paul, I *love* you!"

Then he went.

“ Oh, me ! ” she said to herself, rising slowly, when the sound of his footstep on the stair was lost amidst the sound of other footsteps on the London pavement. “ If I *could* be what I ought to be ! What can I do ? We love each other so ! Yet his wife ought to be a clever woman, to help him on to be famous everywhere, and I am not even commonly bright now, as perhaps I used to be.”

She had slowly paced the floor, and stood before a book-case, partly filled with books which he had given her.

“ Think of my French ! Even Michelet is difficult, and he calls it easy. I can do *nothing*. Children here draw better than I do. Isabel sits up like a stick at the piano, and plays the waltzes of Chopin,—yes, it must be Chopin,—without a mistake. I can neither paint nor play, nor do anything ; yet I love him with all my heart. How can he go on caring for me ? ”

Tears were on her cheeks. Back again at the fireplace, she stood before the mirror, and

saw therein a pale thin face, ruffled hair, and swollen eyes.

“Not even pretty! Yet Paul says that I am, and I know he thinks what he says. Well, then, I suppose it is true generally, and that I am pretty, like a thousand other girls. . . . I would rather be anything else,—yes, I would, indeed. To *think* that I should be loved only because I am pretty!”

She took a candle, said good-evening to no one, but stole quietly to bed. But it was hard to change the current of her thought in that dispirited and weary hour. She tossed about restlessly half the night, and woke weak and tired in the morning.

CHAPTER XI.

WHILE Warner had been engaged in the laudable pursuit of love-making at Folkestone, and while he was arranging in London for the arrival of Madeleine—as, indeed, during the early days of her Kensington sojourn—that young lady's cousin continued her more prosaic career in town, and persevered in her daily journeys from Notting Hill to Bond Street. In the main, Kate Lemon enjoyed work, and work completely agreed with her.

It was an honest, open, regular, and not too easy life that was led, day after day, through changing seasons, by our little London stay-maker.

First, there was the rapid breakfast—the tea and bread-and-butter, with a slice of that

“bit of bacon,” which Mrs. Hassell’s vigilance caused to be deftly prepared for her lord. Then, the long walk business-wards, with the pleasure society does not know—that freshness of the early day which gives a new aspect to the wearied town, and with its bracing bath of air makes even Oxford Street look bright and less familiar. Then, the hours of toil over the sewing-machine, with watchful eyes and clever fingers fitting the work to the needle’s perpetual prick: the harmless uninstructional chatter of ‘prentice-girls and assistants; and then, at two o’clock, the dinner sent into the work-room, with the jug of foaming London stout, which the servant had fetched for eightpence from the public-house down the by-way.

Afterwards, there was the descent to the shop, during the busy afternoon, when Bond Street was alive with customers, and when triumphs of the corset-maker’s art were borne, in cardboard boxes, from the shop-door, across the pavement, to luxurious barouches from the south side of the Park, or to unobtrusive

broughams from the Wood of St. John. Then, the hot tea and more bread and butter—the half-hour's pause—the lighting of the gas, and the return to the sewing-room. And as the day closed, that famous evening process—the undressing of Madame Rose's window for its night's obscurity—the welcome hour of eight striking plainly by the impartial church-clock, whose word no task-mistress would question; the hurrying on of bonnet and shawl, and the scutter homewards, to supper and bed, through the crowded gaslit streets.

Saturday afternoon was a half-holiday. At two o'clock Kate took the Notting Hill omnibus from Oxford Street, and so got home in time for dinner. She worked a little afterwards, with her own sewing-machine, or read herself to sleep with a novel from a cheap library: waking up in time to wash and dress for tea. There was a piano, old and cracked, in the little parlour; and Kate sat down to it sometimes, to pick out from memory an air which she had heard from Christy's Minstrels.

The Christy's Minstrels were her favourite music-makers ; and to their concert she delighted to go once in a while, at night, under the proper protection of her mother or of her step-father, or under the more romantic guardianship of a distant cousin, who came from Camberwell on purpose to escort her. At the minstrels' pathos she was never known to shed a tear, but at their buffooneries she broke into laughs which were a little startling in their merry loudness. This fun was more to her than the wit of Hood or Jerrold, and "Christy" nights were nights of long-remembered glee.

But Sunday was Kate's gala-day. It was then that after church-time she journeyed beyond the neighbourhoods of Notting Hill and Bond Street, and took her pleasure in a race down Richmond Hill, or in a stroll with some young City clerk about the breezy Heath at Hampstead.

Suddenly a new interest sprang up in the life of Kate. The cousin, on whom devolved now and again the pleasing duty of taking her

to "Christy's," was only "cousin" by courtesy, since he was the nephew of Mr. Hassell and not of Kate's mother. The worthy saddler, of Notting Hill, lived in continued awe of this young man's ability. Charles Hassell was neither a mechanic nor a small tradesman. He was clever enough to be a barrister's clerk, and at three-and-twenty was in receipt of nearly two guineas a week.

Charley Hassell had plenty of leisure, and he did not spend it in anything worse than amateur theatricals. He had joined a year or so ago, a little company of non-professional players who amused themselves and their friends by a performance every three months at a small theatre near King's Cross, which was often let for a similar purpose. These amateurs did not seek to benefit by their performances the funds of Lord Smallwood's Penitentiary or Lady Belby's Convalescent Home. They could not aim so high. They frankly acted for the sake of acting, and charged their friends for seats only such modest moneys as would defray the necessary cost of the fun.

Many of the players did badly, and their least successful attempts were those, of course, which were the most ambitious. The greatest difficulty was with the women's parts. Sometimes it was difficult to get young ladies—members' friends—to act at all, and generally when they did act there was a touch of rawness about the performance, which Charley Hassell, with his most constant efforts, could not remove. And when these young ladies were not raw, critics—who of course must have been prejudiced—had a habit of saying that they were stiff, meaningless, or dull.

As an alternative, professional actresses had been tried, and Charley Hassell had spent two or three summer evenings in long omnibus journeys from one end of London to the other, with the object of enquiring for the terms and testimonials of the budding heroines of the stage, who advertised in the theatrical newspaper. But the interviews were rarely satisfactory. Miss Maude Clinton may have been meant by Nature for a great tragédienne; but

in private life she dropped her "h's." Miss Alberta Buckingham may once have been a lovely Desdemona, a comely Rosalind; but when Hassell called upon her she was a sharply-speaking spinster who read *Bell's Messenger* in smoky Dalston lodgings. Miss Ada Clifford may perhaps have been too modest to display to callers at her rooms at Fulham any part of the extensive wardrobe which she advertised as amongst her advantages. Certain it is that though a pretty young woman, she discovered herself to Charley dressed in a draggled alpaca gown, and somewhat slovenly about the neck and hands.

But, in despair of better things, Charley engaged her. She rehearsed, and acted on the eventful night. His own acting aimed to be natural; but Miss Clifford, in the goodness of her nature, was really at much pains to make him stilted. When the performance was over, he almost begrudged her the two-guinea fee, till he learned that her pretty face and her bad elocution were the means by which money was

obtained to pay the doctor for attending her elder brother, who lay all day with diseased spine upon a couch at Fulham.

But though out of his private purse Charley Hassell might have been glad enough to do any service to a young lady who tried to help herself and her sick brother, it was scarcely fair to charge such charity upon the club of amateur actors. He was now busy arranging for the performance of a farce—one of the few farces which are amusing instead of stupid—and he had not hit upon any plan by which he could secure a satisfactory performance of the part of the heroine. Suddenly a thought struck him. Kate Lemon had self-confidence, good looks, and liveliness, and, though she had never yet tried to act, she might do worse than begin now.

So Charley determined to meet her one evening, at eight o'clock, as she was coming out of the shop in Bond Street. He repaired thither from the dull office in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and had been walking up and down for ten minutes when Kate appeared, standing

at the door, and casting a quick look to right and left, as she always did before setting off.

He tapped her on the shoulder with his little cane.

"Why Charley," exclaimed she, giving him her hand, "who would have expected to see you! Take this parcel, please. I must go round by Hanover Square to deliver it. It's a bore, but must be done. I hope 'twon't bother you?"

"Not a bit. We shall have all the more time for talking, and I came on purpose to talk to you."

"How dull you must have been!"

"Stuff and nonsense! But I really came on a particular mission, Kate."

"But I don't care about missions."

"This is a *home*-mission. I want you to help me."

"Well, I will if it's not troublesome."

"Oh, I know better! You don't mind trouble, I'm sure. But here would really be some fun for you."

“Oh, Charley, anything for fun! You would say so if you were like me — shut up for ten hours in a sewing-room and shop; and Madame Rose so hard to please when anything has put her out! Think of it. . . . But what am I to do for you?”

“Act in a little farce which you would find rare lark.”

“But I can’t act.”

“I’m sure you can; so take my word for it. I won’t waste time in telling you the story, if you’ll read it for yourself in a little book I can send you—the book of the play.”

“All right, then.”

“That’s a good girl! You shall have it by to-morrow evening’s post, if I don’t find time to meet you in Bond Street, and bring it myself.”

“Gracious me! Only fancy me an actress! Of course you are going to act?”

“Yes; in the *Bonnie Fishwife*—your lover, Kate.”

“How I hate lovers!”

“What do you mean?”

“Why this, that I should like stories better, and plays too, I daresay, if they hadn’t got such a lot of lovers, always spooning and that sort of thing, you know, instead of attending to their business.”

“Well, in this play *I* shall be your lover, and you know me very well. We’re almost cousins.”

“No, we are nothing of the sort, Mr. Charley. We’re only very good friends, and that’s what we mean to be. And I’d rather act with you than with a stranger. There! That’s flat, you see.”

They had reached Hanover Square. Charley Hassell surrendered the little parcel, and Kate rang the bell at a house close by, and gave in her corset.

Now it happened that Warner had just finished a rapid dinner, and was standing on the club-steps, lighting a cigar, and looking out for the first hansom that should pass. He was due at Kensington for a short evening visit, and was properly anxious to be there. Young

Hassell had not gone up with Kate to the door at which she was delivering her parcel, but had waited within a dozen yards of the club. Warner had perceived the two figures as they first approached; he had seen them separate; and as Kate passed the steps he recognised that it was his future cousin.

"The way of the world," he thought. "So pretty Kate has got a sweetheart too!"

In a minute she came back, and Warner stepped on to the pavement, stopped her, and took her hand.

"What a time since I've seen you, Mr. Warner!"

This was overheard. Then she added in lower tones,—

"It's a shame to keep Maddy locked up at a school. Why don't you bring her to see us?"

"We will come the first opportunity," said Paul, in his usual voice, both clear and strong.

"That's right! Well, good night." And Kate was moving off.

“Who the deuce may *you* be?” demanded Charley Hassell, coming to the front.

“I may be anybody. The young lady can tell you who I *am*. My time, young gentleman, is precious just now, and you really have no need of my explanations.”

Charley drew back, a little mortified; while Warner, who had raised his stick by way of signal to a passing driver, entered a hansom at the moment.

“Good evening, Kate. Good evening, my good sir. . . Kensington main road, without loss of time, cabby.”

CHAPTER XII.

MADELEINE'S fears were gradually dispelled, and she acquiesced in Warner's wish for an early marriage. It was a natural acquiescence, for how was it to be expected that for her own sake she should care to prolong a stay in the midst of Kensington school-girls, and an association with an artificial woman who wearisomely endeavoured to imitate the tone of our modern apostles of culture?

She looked forward with hope to the freer life she should lead with her husband at home—to the hours when he might teach her, by no irksome method, out of the stores of his knowledge, and when she might follow, with the interest born of affection, the successful course of his work. In her brighter moods of

anticipation she would sometimes think, "The day will come when I shall no longer be a child to him. If good wives are made by wishes and prayers, we shall be very happy."

So the winter passed, and the date of the wedding was fixed for the end of February. The banns between Warner and Madeleine were duly published; no one in church urged any cause or just impediment why these two should not be joined together; and the day rapidly drew near.

Warner at first wished to ask only one friend — Mr. Ringley, the musical critic and leader-writer, and companion in ordinary to half-a-dozen young men now rising into notice in the world of Art. Ringley was a good fellow to the core, and would attend the quietest of weddings with greater pleasure than the most gorgeous. But Madeleine did not like to omit all recognition of the excellent people at Notting Hill, and, though she was not anxious for the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Hassell, she stipulated for that of Kate

"I am going to a wedding," said Ringley,—in the club smoking-room—"which is to come off in the ugliest church in the diocese. At least, that was Bishop Bloomfield's opinion of the quaint old place down at Kensington."

"Going as bridegroom?" asked an acquaintance, who knew Ringley only at the club.

"No, I am but the Horatio of the tragedy. They have found me a bridesmaid out of the usual line—a pretty dressmaker, or something of the sort. A girl who is to be seen about Bond Street, I believe: the poor relation, you know, of the distinguished bride."

"Then you will make a party somewhat after the fashion of the famous one in *Aurora Leigh*, when, by a wedding in Piccadilly between Romney Leigh and some daughter of the people, St. James's and St. Giles's were to have their little differences reconciled."

"Nothing of that kind," said Ringley; "the only new thing will be my bridesmaid."

"Let us know to-morrow how she looked," said the other man, as Ringley rose to leave.

There had been some discussion as to whether Miss Markham should be asked. Warner thought she could best bring Madeleine to the church, but Madeleine preferred to be accompanied by Kate : so it was decided that this should be. She was not to return to Kensington after the wedding, and her few possessions were despatched the day before to the house which Warner had taken at Craven Hill—a small, but pleasant house, having a studio with a north light.

It was arranged that Ringley should offer the little party a simple breakfast in a private room at Verrey's restaurant, after the ceremony; and when breakfast was over, Warner and Madeleine were to go away for a week's visit to the cathedral-towns of Kent. Rochester was to be the first place ; Canterbury, the second.

At last, everything was settled. Miss Markham, the evening before the wedding, had wished Madeleine every happiness in life, and had presented her, as a token of those good

wishes, with a copy of Herbert Spencer's Essays, which she had not herself been able to digest. Ringley had journeyed from Pimlico with a little locket he had bought a day or two before. Warner, too, on his last call at Kensington, had given Madeleine a dressing-case, which was a surprise to her, and had brought down for Miss Markham the parting present of a jardinière for the dull school-house drawing-room. It was a time when every one was brimming over with good nature and kind wishes. Brotherly love was in the ascendant, and all our friends lived together in unity.

Madeleine was tired out with her little preparations, but none of her old calm had deserted her, and very quietly she said good-night to Warner at ten o'clock on the evening preceding the wedding.

The February morning broke cold and grey. Ringley swallowed a cup of coffee in Stanley Street, and took a cab to Somerset Street, Portman Square, where were Paul Warner's rooms.

"Courage up?" he asked, as he entered his friend's apartment.

"Why not? You are punctual to the minute," said Paul, looking at the time-piece. "I hope no work kept you out of bed last night, or it must have been an effort to get up this morning."

"I had nothing to do," answered Ringley; "but when I have seen you safely out of my hands to-day, I must go to the office and ascertain whether my usual leader will be required of me."

"Let us start," said Paul: "we may as well walk across the Park."

They started, and reached the old church at Kensington at a quarter before ten. Ten was the hour appointed for the ceremony. Till then they waited in pensive contemplation of the memorials of the Georgian era which decorated the place. At three minutes to the hour, the curate, with shining morning face, made his appearance and hurriedly assumed a vestment. At ten, exactly, Madeleine arrived. She had

walked the quarter of a mile with Kate, who was the very soul of punctuality.

Kate looked so charming in her little walking-dress, that it is a pity Charley Hassell was not there to see her. Madeleine was happy and calm ; and Ringley, who went down to the church-door to receive her, and who was to "give her away," half repented of the fears he had expressed in his letter to Vipán. "Surely," he thought, "there must be something in the young woman after all." But that was no time for continuing his reflections, for Madeleine was on his arm, the party were at the altar, and the service was beginning.

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here," read the curate ; and the group round the altar listened attentively : and a nurse with two children, who had stolen in during their morning's walk, peered curiously at the bride in her plain warm attire.

When it was over, Warner kissed his wife, and Ringley astonished her by doing so also. They all signed the book ; and the curate con-

gratulated Paul as heartily as if they had been bosom friends for a dozen years, or as if he were certified of the fact that Madeleine could be no other than a model wife.

The pew-opener and the parish-clerk having been liberally rewarded for their attendance, the little party prepared to depart in a couple of small broughams which Warner had ordered to be in waiting to convey them to Verrey's. Things had changed since their arrival, for now on their way through the church-yard they passed under an awning. As they were driving off, a crowd was in front of the church ; shopkeepers' assistants were standing in open doorways ; policemen and street-boys were occupying the road. They succeeded in starting, but had not left the High Street before they met a line of carriages with postilions and prancing pairs of greys. Inside these vehicles, were lovely maidens, sympathising friends, a portly father, and a daughter who shivered in thin white raiment.

It was Sir Samuel Veto's child and heiress,

on her way to espouse Sir Matthew Loom, the worsted-spinner, whom his native town had sent to Parliament because his father had left him a fortune, and whom a Minister of stern integrity had made a baronet because he was a political partisan.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE little festival at Verrey's passed off satisfactorily. No one was particularly merry, but no one was disagreeably dull. Ringley, like a sensible man of the world, accommodated himself to the situation, and did not attempt to be wearisomely facetious. Nor was he awkwardly silent. Kate Lemon, never having been a bridesmaid before, was not aware that in view of the happy fact which she is present to witness, it is a bridesmaid's business to be a little coquettish; but Kate's ready sense prevented her from behaving as if she were out of her element whilst associating with a journalist who had won by his brains a creditable place in society. Paul Warner was at home with the

ease of culture ; Madeleine, with the ease of a nature simple and unsophisticated.

Very early in the afternoon the happy couple started for Rochester, as it had been arranged that they should do ; Kate trotted cheerfully away to Notting Hill High Street ; and Ringley betook himself to the *Morning Press* office, and produced a social article which was the ornament of the next day's paper.

Paul and Madeleine were pleasantly employed in the cathedral-towns of Kent. It was pleasant, in the first place, to be alone with each other ; pleasant to walk together over new ground in city, suburb, and neighbouring country ; pleasant to attend the grand yet quiet services in these noble churches, and to leave far behind them that London life which was in the Past for both of them and would be for both in the Future.

It is true that Paul had ample opportunities to wish that his wife understood what he said about architecture ; and indeed it did sometimes cross his mind that it might be well for

her to know the difference between a Norman arch and a Gothic, and to have some means of saying surely whether a Perpendicular window was work of the fifteenth century or of the fifth. But how could these things possibly affect their happiness? The very idea was absurd. Paul and Madeleine were the most contented people to be found in all the county.

The fourth day after the wedding, they reached Canterbury, and took up their quarters in the old hotel in the quaint narrow street of that city. For Paul, the place teemed with associations, from the days of Thomas à Becket to his own, and Madeleine was pleased to imagine the house where the Agnes of *David Copperfield* lived with her good old father. So both of them found Canterbury interesting, and neither was in a hurry to leave it.

“*The Times*, I perceive!” said Warner to his wife, as he entered the little sitting-room in which she was making tea, on the evening before their return to Town.

They had been together to afternoon

service in the cathedral, and Warner, having brought Madeleine back to the hotel, had continued his walk for another half-hour.

"Yes," said Madeleine, "the waiter brought it in with the tea-tray."

"Beneficent individual!" remarked the husband. "One cannot be romantic in England, even if one has a mind to be. Nor even abroad, for the matter of that, can one get beyond the range of the irrepressible *Times*. Now Madeleine, *can* you be romantic with such palpable evidence of the work-a-day world before your eyes?"

"I can love you, Paul," she answered; crossing the room to sit beside him. . . .

"But I must not stay here or my tea will be spoiled. Bring your chair to the fire: isn't it a bright one? There! Now for the tea!"

"*On est bien ici*," said Paul Warner. "Maddy, you make this heavy old room look quite cheerful and pretty. You carry a fairy's wand. But what have you been reading in *The Times*?"

“Not very much. I do think it is a very tiresome paper. If you wrote at all, Paul, you would write something far more interesting. Does Mr. Ringley write in *The Times*, I wonder?”

“Not he; though having taken up social subjects in general, and dropped mere musical criticism to a great extent, he will probably end by doing so. It is a journalist’s great achievement. . . . What did you read?”

“Oh, chiefly the ‘Births, Deaths, and Marriages!’ Nothing at all important. I came upon such a funny thing among the marriages, though. A relation of mine was evidently married the day before yesterday.”

“What relation? But poor little Maddy, you have no large choice of relations.”

“It says ‘Edwin Greyling.’ That must be my father’s brother.”

“I have scarcely ever heard about him.”

“Well, Paul, you know I never saw him myself.”

“More than that: I never gave him a

thought," observed Warner. "You seemed so distinctly alone. Who is this old gentleman?"

"He is not old."

"How so?"

"My father was only middle-aged when he died, and his brother Edwin was much younger. Ten years younger, I think."

"Then, probably, there were others between them."

"Yes : there was one. A sister Mary : only two years younger than my father was. But papa spoke so seldom about his family that really I have not had the means of knowing much about it. Besides, dear papa was everything to me. When he died, I dreamed on quietly : all alone, as you know, but not in any despair. Not even frightened by looking forward. Then you came, and now *you* are all the world to me. You are all the world."

"My own wife!" said Warner, in a tone of genuine tenderness. A minute afterwards he

resumed. "What is it you do know about this sister? For let us begin with her."

"She was very good. She and my father were so fond of each other. If she had lived long, she would have been kind to my mother."

"Hm!" muttered Warner.

"I am quite sure that she would. When papa went to Yorkshire, to avow his marriage, she wrote him a letter which I always keep."

"Why?"

"She said in it that she hoped some day their father, old Mr. Greyling—I cannot think of him as my grandfather—would relent, and that he would do so all the sooner if no one opposed him. He was a man, Paul, whose will was law."

"Like Farmer Allen, in Tennyson's *Dora*," said Warner; "and like many another old fool, who thinks that a strong will is the same thing as a strong mind. But let me hear the rest."

"She died of scarlet fever, a fortnight or so after writing the letter. She can hardly have been older than I am now—perhaps two or

three and twenty. My father did not know of her death till the day after her funeral. What could poor papa do then ? ”

“ Ah ! indeed. Not very much.”

“ Though he had come into the North he was not near her. His cottage house, by Danby Moor, was fifty miles—perhaps more—from his father’s estate. That is because Yorkshire is such a large place, you know.”

“ Well, what happened, Maddy ? ”

“ Nothing happened. Under the circumstances, papa could not possibly thrust himself before his relations. Besides, he was occupied with his wife. Mother was not strong. I was born a month or two afterwards.”

“ Now about the brother : this—what is his name ? ”

“ Edwin Greyling.”

“ But first, another question. I have been told by you long ago, but may have remembered incorrectly. Yet, surely your father’s mother had died previously, or she would have prevented this cruelty ? ”

“Oh, yes, Paul! She was dead long before. But perhaps, if she had been alive, she never could have prevented it, if old Mr. Greyling’s will was law.”

“Hang such law! But don’t let me interrupt you any more.”

“My father’s brother Edwin was some ten years younger than papa, as I think I said before. When all this happened, he must have been a boy at school, or perhaps he had a tutor at home. At all events, he was very young, and was not mixed up in the trouble at all.”

“Exactly. But in process of time he came to what we term, satirically, ‘years of discretion;’ and when he was grown up he must have been greater fool or greater knave than most men if he did not stir in the matter.”

“Yes. I should think he was very silly.”

“No one, Maddy, had done the fellow any injury. Your father had married your mother—naturally, and of necessity, too—as an honourable man. That was the grievance, I suppose.

Legal ties are so inconvenient for the interests of families. Perhaps, however, this Edwin Greyling was more knave than fool, and saw the advantage of not interfering with the old gentleman's intention to disinherit his eldest son."

"I don't know. I scarcely like to think so, Paul."

"On the other hand, he may have been told a false story. The old man may have invented falsehoods about your mother, and so made it impossible for Edwin Greyling to recognise her, her husband, or her child."

"Ah!" said Madeleine, starting at the thought. Her cheeks were suffused with colour. "If my father's father did that, he was a wicked man; and why should we trouble ourselves about the matter?"

"What do you think, Maddy, was your father's impression of his brother's part in the affair?"

"Papa did not often tell me. I daresay he thought it strange that his brother should never have cared to hear anything about him."

"Was the property entailed?"

"What does that mean?"

"Was it locked up from father to son, or was it possible to will it away?"

"Quite possible, I should think."

"Well, but Maddy dear, did your father's grandfather live at the place?"

"No, never at that place."

"Then it is not in the least likely to have been entailed property. Besides, your father's conduct was that of a man who knew he was *liable* to be disinherited. I consider that question settled. Now tell me what was the name of the place?"

"I don't know. Papa never told me."

"Why not?"

"Ah! How can I tell? I can only guess, you know. I think he was very much hurt at the treatment he had received, and did not care for me ever to be claimed by any of his relations."

"But you were not left well off when he died. You were scarcely independent. Still,

I admit that this would make it the more galling for you to owe anything to those who had wronged him so grievously."

"Yes, Paul. That was it, I think."

"Besides, it is not as if you had been left entirely alone. Good Mrs. Hassell is after all your aunt, and she is an honest woman. I admit that it was better to leave, as it were, the responsibility of looking after you with her, than to trust to the problematical justice of people to whom justice would be something new."

"Paul dear, let us forget it. What can it matter to us?"

"Not very much, probably. But curiosity is not confined to women, and I claim to be satisfied. Let me see the announcement in the paper."

Madeleine had settled down to some small needlework. Paul reached *The Times*, which was lying on the sideboard, and conned the supplement's first column.

"'Marriages,'" he read in under-tone. Then, raising his voice, "'Brown—Winthrop; Curtis—

Palmer; D'Eyncourt—Lester; Robinson—Scott; Greyling — Winter.' Ah, here it is! '2nd March. At All Souls', Langham Place, by the Reverend William Tilley, M.A., Edwin Greyling, Esq., to Barbara, widow of the late Sefton Winter, Esq., of Brussels.' — So it tells us nothing of Edwin Greyling's place of abode. Strange-looking advertisement! Yet the strangeness may be owing to an accidental omission."

"And he has married a widow, you see," said Madeleine.

Warner rang the bell.

"Coals," said he to the waiter when that functionary appeared.

The fuel was long in coming, and in the interval Warner had time to reflect upon the personality of Edwin Greyling. He reflected aloud, as it was not his habit to shut up his thoughts before Madeleine. And he thus spoke :—

"I don't imagine, Maddy, that it matters much to us who the man is or what he does; but still, one would like to know. Your father's

reticence leads me to think he did not in the least care for you to be 'up' in the details of his brother's history. And it is not really necessary that we should be."

He paused for a minute.

"Under these circumstances, I shall let the matter alone; though it would be easy enough to know something, by inquiries at the church, if not by a hundred other means. But *à quoi bon?* Fate has not put it in our way. Your father did not wish it; it cannot be necessary; and I am a bad hand to play the spy."

"So!" said Madeleine. "Let it rest."

"And yet," thought Warner to himself, "it has taken possession of me in a way which Maddy cannot understand. I hate questions that are unsolved. The man may be a worthy gentleman, or a swindler in a company that has smashed. He may make Maddy's maiden name illustrious, or he may go to the gallows with it. Who knows, by Jove, but that he may be in this hotel on his wedding-tour at the present moment! Or I may know him now by sight, and

meet him every day of my life in London, where there are some people who are always turning up—you can no more get rid of them than if you and they lived in a small and secluded village.

. . . These are fancies! After all, I may never see anything of the man. Why should he be coming to *me* out of the dim Future!”

“Maddy dear,” said Warner, turning round towards her, “where are the cards? Let me teach you Bézique to-night.”

CHAPTER XIV.

ON a Sunday morning in the beginning of April—a month after the talk narrated in the last chapter—Mrs. Hassell was “laying the cloth” in the little parlour at Notting Hill. The good woman was rather warm and weary after operations downstairs, in which the maid-of-all-work had but inefficiently assisted her; and it weighed upon Mrs. Hassell’s mind that a boiled leg of mutton was still in the throes of preparation, and that much depended upon the caper-sauce, which was not yet properly finished.

The worthy saddler, her husband, thought that Sunday should be, as far as he was concerned, a day of rest; and accordingly he made it so. He was now sitting in the easy chair on one side of the fireplace, and on his knees there

lay a copy of the cheap newspaper which was his morning's literature. He was resplendent in brightly brushed boots, shining black trousers, a fancy waistcoat, a blue neck-handkerchief, and a clean shirt starched to uncomfortable but dignified stiffness. His frock-coat, which would be assumed at dinner, out of respect to Charley Hassell (who was going to join the party), now lay over the back of a cane-bottomed chair. For Mr. Hassell shared in the view of Sunday comfort prevalent amongst our lower middle-class, and rest was truly rest to him only when he sat in his shirt-sleeves, with the pipe on the mantelpiece, ready to be filled, and the week's police news close at hand in the Sunday paper.

Charley was late. It had been arranged that he should meet Kate Lemon at church, and they were to come home immediately after the service. It was now one o'clock. The mutton, the vegetables, and the sauce were ready, and Mrs. Hassell dreaded lest anything should be spoiled. The cooking finished, she so disposed her fare that it might, if possible,

keep warm without injury, until the arrival of her daughter and of her husband's nephew. Then she went upstairs to talk to her lord.

"Charley isn't doing Kate no good," said she : "if she do stick to her work it must be as much as she can stand. Them theatricals takes the strength out of her."

"Trust Charley, I say," answered her spouse. "He's as honest a chap as ever lived."

"Who said he wasn't, I wonder? You know, 'Assell, I always took a fancy to Charley."

"And he'll make his way, whatever he tries. He has it in his head, I tell you. A sharp clever fellow, Betsy, or my name's not Hassell."

"Why don't he take to the stage himself?" asked the wife. "He's pretty much his own master, and 'as no fam'ly to disgrace. Not that I think it really a disgrace, mark you."

"He says he ain't so clever in actin' as Kate; and if people says true, Betsy, your

Kate's a wonderful girl in this respec', and no mistake."

"I know that well enough, John. The manager that saw her act the Bonnie Fishwife told me so. But I must see her famous and well-paid afore I reg'larly approve of her going on the stage for her livin'. Still there's one thing I'll say for Kate. She haven't lost her head by the amatoor theatricals. Now many a girl who 'ad been told what they told her 'ud have given over reg'lar work at once and done nothing but train for actin'."

"So I say," rejoined the husband: "let Kate alone! Kate will come to no harm. Who approved of her stayin' in Bond Street along with Madam Rose, if Charley didn't? It was Charley as told her that she must make sure of the new thing before she gave up the old. Don't she stick to her stay-makin'?"

"Yes; and half wears herself to death of evenings, 'Assell, by rehearsin' and practisin' for the stage."

"Let her alone, I say, and never fear! No

harm 'ull come to her. When the doctor saw her three years back in scarlet fever, he passed the remark that she had plenty of staminum."

"So she 'as."

"In two or three months' time she takes her holiday, and then she tries her luck at some theatre in the country. If she succeeds, all's well, Betsy: and, after all, what's the great harm if she don't? She'll come back contented enough to Madame Rose in Bond Street."

"'Assell, if you and I 'ad 'ad any children you couldn't 'ave made more of them than you makes of Kate. I'll say that for you. She've got no cause to complain of her stepfather. . . . There she is, a-fiddlin' with the latch-key. I'll get the dinner up."

In a minute, Mrs. Hassell had reached the kitchen, Charley was in the parlour, and Kate had run upstairs to take off her bonnet.

The possible evils of artistic pursuits were evidently present to the good mother's mind. It is not to be supposed that she thought of them connectedly, but her conversation at

dinner showed the way in which her meditations went.

"You haven't been walkin' in Kensington Gardens?" said Mr. Hassell to his nephew.

"Oh, no, uncle! Kate said we must come straight back from church. The parson gave us a long sermon."

"I was so sleepy," said Kate. Then, turning to her cousin, "Oh, Charley, what do you think?"

"What?" asked Charley.

"Mother went to see Maddy yesterday at her new house on Craven Hill. It's quite a short walk from here, you know. She lives in a beautiful house. I was there once."

"A beautiful 'ouse don't make you 'appy," said Mrs. Hassell, "and I don't know as Madeleine's 'ouse is so beautiful after all. Respectable-lookin' outside, that's all."

"And full of pretty things, I suppose," said Charley.

"Stuffed full of queer ones, if you like," his hostess answered. "I wonder Madeleine don't

feel strange. I expect she *do*, poor thing, but won't confess it. That would come out if the truth was known."

"Why what's the matter with the place, mother?" asked Kate.

"They've a queer-painted floor, or wood laid in, in the dining-room, with an ugly bit of carpet from Persia, according to what she says. Think of that, 'Assell! Kidderminster carpets is good enough for us, and best Brussels would be if we 'ad a hundred thousand pounds a-year."

"Matter of taste," urged Charley, amused at this emphatic declaration. "In the East, they know how to mix colours better, you see."

"Stuff and nonsense! How can heathen know better than Englishmen?"

That decided the question, in Mrs. Hassell's opinion. Then she continued:—

"Instead of nice mahogany chairs, fit for a gentleman's dining-room, they've got queer carved things, made of oak. In the passages, there are brackets with plain old-looking jars upon them: as ugly as them at the British

Museum. The shape's very uncommon, I make no doubt. Then the drawing-room isn't furnished regular, with a nice sweet of chairs : there's not two things alike : nothing that matches."

"Modern fashion," Charley said.

"Modern nonsense ! . . . Then I went into the study—the stewdio, they call it. It is hung with old faded stuff, like worsted-work, patched up here and there."

"Tapestry," said Kate.

"Mr. Warner does his paintin' there. It has lots of plaster 'eads and arms 'ung about."

"I like those," volunteered Charley.

"One great plaster woman looks as if she's used to boxin', though she only has one part of an arm, which makes her look ugly and deformed. How can he consider that beautiful, I should like to know ! This big woman is the Venus of Mile End."

"Mile End !" cried Charley : "you mean 'Milo.'"

"No such thing. I can remember a name ;

specially when it's not strange to me, which this isn't."

The younger Hassell was discreetly silent.

"There's a screen, too, in the room. You would never guess what that's for, if you guessed a twelvemonth."

"Oh, I know! Madeleine told me," said Kate, thinking it best to cut this matter short. "It makes a sort of dressing-room behind, where his models change their dress. Maddy told me so."

"Fancy spending your life a-paintin' of nearly nood men and women!" growled Mr. Hassell. "A man ought to be ashamed of himself, says I."

Charley thought it wise to offer no opinion upon this point. Mrs. Hassell resumed.

"Some minx flounced upstairs when I was there. I should like to know 'ow Madeleine can be expected to like a man that flirts and galivants with all sorts of characters as Mr. Warner must? 'Models,' indeed!"

"Oh!" said Charley, who generously forgot

his own impetuous rush in Hanover Square, and Warner's coolness upon that occasion, "there's no need for him to flirt. A man can't flirt and paint too, and his pictures show that he paints, Kate says."

"You mark my words," said Mrs. Hassell, ignoring this observation. "Them artist-people don't make good husbands. So you look out, Kate; for I shouldn't wonder if as soon as you take to the stage, and give up the shop, some artist gentleman don't make up to *you*. You know what to expect, 'owever. They get spoiled and flattered, too. When I was at Mr. Warner's, up comes a grand carriage and pair. A footman thunders at the door—I was lookin' out of the dinin'-room window—and Lady Augusta What's-her-name had come to see the stewdio. Mr. Warner bowed her about among his old tapistery canvas work and plaster figures and picture boards and queer dresses. You should have seen her ladyship! Madeleine looked nothing at all along side of her."

Dinner was over ; Mrs. Hassell went downstairs to help her maid in "washing-up ;" and Kate, who worked so hard during the week that she well earned her rest on Sunday, prepared for a walk with Charley.

Charley stood, handling the common-looking ornaments on the chimney-piece, and the head of the family laid aside his coat of state, and sat again with visible shirt-sleeves, in the parlour easy-chair. Then he lighted a pipe, and began his smoking for the quiet afternoon.

In five minutes Kate came down ready to start.

"What do you mean to do with yourselves ?" asked the saddler.

"Oh," said Kate, "if it were a month later, Charley might take me down to Richmond ! Or wouldn't it be jolly at Kew Gardens ! But as it is, I suppose there's nothing better than a walk in the Park. Eh, Charley : what do you say ?"

"Nothing better," said this cousin-by-courtesy, as pretty Kate and he turned to go.

“Them two would make a very good pair of sweethearts,” thought Hassell, as the smoke rose from his pipe of peace. “Where’s a better chap than Charley, or a smarter girl than Kate?”

CHAPTER XV.

WARNER'S one picture for the Academy of 1868 had been finished just before his marriage—that is, towards the end of February. When he came back from Kent, in the first week of March, he had only to see to the framing and varnishing. He rejected all the designs for frames which were to be had at the gilders', and designed one for himself instead.

“Some artists do this,” said Ringley, to the blind author, Wilfrid Harris; “but chiefly those who make a luxury of their individuality and cherish private crotchets as if they were great principles. Not that I put Warner in this class, however!”

“You are hard on them,” said Harris; “let

clever men stamp their own individuality on every accessory of their work. Let them do it, and welcome !”

“ I grant,” said Ringley, “ it is better to stamp your individuality upon everything than merely to stamp your initials, as the modern fashion is. I measure a man’s vanity by the number of his monograms, and am not far out in my calculation.”

“ Edith,” said Harris—he was speaking of his wife—“ has admired the one or two pictures she has seen of Warner’s, and she has described them to me, so that I think I know them. Her descriptions do almost as much for me as my eyes used to do. But she has not seen the new picture. Let me call on Warner with you. I should like to meet him.”

“ With all my heart,” said Ringley. “ Tomorrow afternoon, if you are not engaged.”

“ I am not,” Harris answered. “ Come up here in a hansom when your work is done, and we can go on to Craven Hill together.”

Ringley did as he was asked, and at five

o'clock on an April day the two men were in Warner's studio. The painter and his wife were there, too; and the new picture, framed, but not yet varnished, was displayed upon an easel.

Paul had received a couple of lines apprising him of the intended visit, and Madeleine had thought to herself, "I will keep to my own part of the house this afternoon. These clever people talk about what I shall never understand." But Warner wished her to be in the studio, and she stayed.

"For my own sake," said Harris, when he was seated on the divan, "I wish I could add my word about your new picture, Mr. Warner, to that of the rest of the world. But it must be a matter of indifference to you, if, as I have often heard, artists think nothing of a non-professional opinion."

"Artists overdo that," said Ringley, "and narrow themselves into coteries; each coterie believing that it alone possesses the secret of Art and is the sole depository of all that is taught

by the pictures of Rafael, Michael Angelo, and Titian. Don't you think so, Warner?"

"Yes, to some extent I agree with you, That is, no doubt, one result of the cliques. For myself, I would neither deny the merits of very different schools from that one which I wish to follow, nor would I shut our writers and amateurs—in my French sense of that word; 'lovers,' you know — from judgment upon our work. To do so would be in fact to deny the existence of any such gift as criticism apart from another gift—the power to create. Sheer madness, in my opinion! Undoubtedly a man not able to paint may nevertheless be able to criticize."

"And there are popular painters who cannot criticize at all. You will admit that," urged Ringley.

"Popular painters—yes. Great painters—no. A man who can't criticize can't paint," Paul answered.

"Exactly so. No man can choose the good in Art—in other words, for my present purpose,

no man can be a great painter—without knowing *why* he chooses it. The greatest artists, in every branch, are the broadest in their appreciation. In music, for instance, whom did not Schumann understand and appreciate?”

“But, on the whole,” said Harris to Warner, “you would think painters’ opinions better worth having than those of *littérateurs*?”

“Yes; upon the whole—because so many literary men, who criticize Art for us in the papers, never study art at all for its own sake, but study only how to write fine sentences about it.”

“True enough!”

“There is one man for whose opinion I would give more than for that of any half dozen critics or painters in Europe.”

“And will he see the picture?” asked Harris, with an interested expression.

“He cannot,” answered Warner; “for he died a year ago. I mean Ingres.”

“And there is no one to supply his place?” said Harris.

"No one."

"Not Gérôme?" asked Ringley.

"My very good fellow, learn to paint, and answer that question for yourself! . . . There's a bit of my painter's jealousy of interference, you see," Warner added, laughing.

Ringley good-humouredly joined in the laugh, and Warner went on speaking.

"Gérôme is appreciated in England because he tells a story so pointedly on canvas. You do not always like—*we* do not like, I mean; for I am English—the stories which he tells, but we do like his way of telling them. He is, above all things, dramatic. He sees everything, good and bad, and paints all that he sees. He never needed St. Peter's vision, for *he* never called anything common or unclean. I daresay I follow Gérôme unconsciously, myself—though, necessarily, at a most respectful distance. But I would rather follow Ingres, if only I could. Yet, fully understand me, I am behind no one in admiration of Gérôme."

"What do you think," asked Harris, "of the

Phryne before the Tribunal? I once heard a painter say he felt powerless before it: that it was his art's despair."

"Yet many people do not like it at all, Mr. Harris. It remains, nevertheless, a great picture. And I could defend it upon moral grounds, too. In the first place, it was not painted for a ladies'-school. Every artist, whether painter, sculptor, actor, or writer, has to deal with human nature, and human nature is not always good. Thus much for the marvellous expression in the men's faces—exultation, amusement, leering curiosity, fiendish delight: all of which are painted with extraordinary power. But so far, I admit, the thing teaches no lesson. Phryne was accused of impurity: truly enough, as it is not for me to tell you. Now some thought, as you know also, that the highest beauty could not co-exist with impurity—must, instead, be allied with innocence. The advocate, in the excitement of his defence, tears off the robe, and says defiantly, by gesture, 'Can she be impure

being so exquisitely beautiful ?' Well, unfortunately she is. But look a little closer. In the instant raising of the arm to cover the shamed face, and in the averted head, one discerns some remnant of a by-gone modesty : our Shakespeare's 'soul of goodness in things evil.'"

"You extol Gérôme with a will," said Ringley ; "yet you were almost in a passion when I asked if he could take the place of Ingres."

"And why not ? I can praise Gérôme : I scarcely dare to praise Ingres. And yet one cannot help doing so. I believe that nearly all that is good in French and English Art, at this moment—putting aside the landscape schools, which have undoubtedly their own merits—is due to the influence, direct or indirect, of this incomparable man. It is absurd to say that Gérôme, though a pupil of Delaroche, would have been what he is without the example of Ingres. It is as absurd to say that Ingres has not influenced Cabanel, though Cabanel may not be reckoned among

his pupils. I know that Cabanel paints the play of light and shade on surfaces of flesh better than *he* did but the living painter owes much to the master, notwithstanding. Besides these, and others somewhat similarly circumstanced, there are Ingres's own pupils—Balze, Sébastien Cornu, and Romain Cazes : not to speak of the great one who is dead. Then, here in England, we have Calderon, Watts, Leighton, Armitage, and Albert Moore : a dozen others too. Do you suppose they owe nothing to the painter of *La Source*, of *L'Apothéose d'Homère*, of *Le Martyre de Saint Symphorien* !”

“ Ah !” said Harris, “ what do you think of Albert Moore ? My wife has spoken to me of him more than once.”

“ He sees the world as if it were one great Greek frieze. And when he paints this that he sees, it is like exquisite music.”

“ I am of your mind,” said Ringley ; “ though I see a possible reservation in your praise, Warner. But enough for the present, of other

people's pictures. Give me time to look at your own."

"Madeleine," said Warner, "let us have a few glasses. I will ask Mr. Harris to try the Cyprus which Lord Keynsham brought home. He meant us to drink it, most undoubtedly—not to keep it, in remembrance of him."

Madeleine, who had said not a word during the conversation, left her little task of needlework, at Warner's asking. She returned very soon, and Harris began to speak to her.

"You must be learned in all painters' talk by this time, Mrs. Warner, and be thankful when you get an empty studio."

"Oh, no!" said Madeleine, coming near to the blind man. "I only wish I understood. I have seen scarcely any pictures; but I am sure none can be better than this one of Paul's."

"Flat heresy!" broke in her husband, turning off the remark as easily as he could. "My wife snubs all the great men, from Cimabue to Flandrin."

"No, Paul; not all, indeed! You forget how I like Faed."

"He is not great at all," said Warner. "Once he was a little pathetic, with his cottage-scenes—"

"Yes: the dear children!" interrupted Madeleine.

"But having learnt to paint rags, he must needs paint them always."

"That is too hard," said Ringley. "I protest there is some good in Faed. But now describe to Harris, here, your own picture."

"Maddy, you can describe it," said Paul, turning to his wife.

"Oh, no, Paul! I should never know whereabouts to begin. It is so pretty!"

"Save us from mere 'prettiness,'!" thought Paul, though he did not say so. Then he turned to Harris.

"I call it *Mary in the House of John*; but it is scarcely more than my idea of the Madonna at that time, long after Christ's death, and it has no striking subject. It is

late evening ; a thin sad woman, grey-haired and pale, is resting after the day's toil ; she has been making raiment for the poor, to whom her son long ago ministered. John is away on Christ's commission to preach, and this woman—Madonna, of course—is alone in the quiet chamber. Deep twilight in the house of John, and outside there is the silent night. You see the distinctness of the stars in the high eastern sky ? This tired woman is looking at them between the bare window-bars—looking with strange vivid memories, and with thoughts of her son's delay. It is an expression—if I have not failed utterly—of quiet resignation, patient fulfilment of the daily work, combined with a hope that is so dwindling as to be almost sad. A thousand times the hot and busy day has given place, you know, to the tranquil night, and still no change ! ‘ Where is the promise of His coming ? ’ ”

“ Thank you,” said Harris. “ Could I but see it ! My wife will notice it, however, very particularly at the Academy.”

"I'll give you a few details somewhat more precisely," said Warner, "as you are so kind as to be interested."

He gave them, and ended by saying, "I was often inclined to give up that picture. It is too great for me—a subject for Holman Hunt. To treat religious subjects becomes more and more difficult. Who could reach now the combined dignity, authority, and tenderness which Ingres showed in *Christ giving the Keys of the Church*?—one of our last great religious pictures."

Then the two visitors prepared to depart, and bade adieu to Madeleine in proper form.

"I am infinitely obliged to you," said Warner to Harris, "for coming here with Ringley. He had often spoken of you to me, and I was quite looking forward to meeting you. Mr. Harris, your last book gives a man genuine satisfaction; and one who was a stranger till to-day may, perhaps, be allowed to say so. My wife and I have been reading it together. Have we not, Maddy?"

“Yes, it is a most delightful novel,”
Madeleine replied.

“I am not speaking of anybody’s novel,”
Warner said, somewhat quickly and sharply,
“but of Mr. Harris’s book on Molière, which
Ringley gave to us.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE London season had again come round, and with it the distractions which beset successful men.

Warner's picture was by no means the popular thing at the Academy, though it was admired strongly by those who admired it at all. But a score of inferior works had larger crowds of gazers from the country and the suburbs.

Mr. McCosh, R.A., exhibited an historical picture, with a quotation from Macaulay which filled half a page of the catalogue, and ladies crowded enthusiastically round this marvellous presentment of cream-faced gentlemen with uncertain legs, but with elaborately-painted raiment. It was a triumph of realism—it was history brought under our very eyes.

Mr. Stagger, R.A., hung upon "the line" a crude beginning of a fancy portrait which he had lacked the industry to finish but not the effrontery to exhibit. The subject was a Welsh girl, with cheeks as red as tomatoes, an arm not quite so shapely as an average lamp-post, and hands so drawn or blurred that the number of fingers upon each was left to the free choice of the beholder. It was a picture which gave proof of the master's ready touch : it abounded in rugged power.

Mr. Dilly, R.A., enriched the exhibition with a waxy representation of a three-years-old baby, who turned his toes in, and wore a stiff white frock and a broad pink sash. The picture appealed to our higher instincts, and called forth our nobler sympathies : therefore, the infant became exceedingly popular, and engravings of him were to be seen, six months afterwards, in almost every middle-class house from Bayswater to Brixton.

But if Warner's work did not quite rival in general estimation the productions of some

among the elder academicians, it brought encouragement from fellow artists who were winning a reputation which was deserved. Young England, of the studios, the journals, and the universities, was loud in its praise. Warner had been extolled a year ago, and he was extolled again. Mayfair and Belgravia had rapidly echoed the cry which artists and writers had raised; and once more Paul Warner found himself ready to drift down the stream of society.

But though, if esteem passed into flattery, it might injure the painter's character, it could not, at all events for the moment, do much to injure his work. His words, "I am learning to draw," were no paltry affectation, but the honest expression of a man who was clear-sighted enough to discern the distance which separated him from the masters of his craft.

Now, however, that he had gained the help of public encouragement, he wanted the help of private sympathy. At no previous time had he looked for it or counted upon it, but now he

wished that his wife understood his aims, and that she could give him counsel and support, as well as impetuous girlish affection. She gave him unlimited trust and tenderness, and something like adoration for qualities which he did not really possess. She gave, as it seemed to him, everything but the appreciation which he needed the most. She gave him love, as a daughter sometimes gives to a father who is all to her; but thus far he was denied the sympathy which is rest in time of leisure and stimulus in time of action.

It would have been cruel to blame her for being that which she was. How could an uncultured though sensitive girl be turned by the mere fact of marriage into a woman of insight and industry, with reliance upon herself, comprehension of her husband, and easy correctness in her estimate of the world around? How could a girl who six months previously had scarcely seen a picture, be now a wise critic of her husband's art? To become such a wife as Warner really wanted—however differently

he may have thought in the illusive hours of courtship—it was requisite not only to have mental gifts, which perhaps Madeleine had not, but also time, which thus far she could not have had.

So reasoned Paul, during the almost wasted days of the London summer; when, as he was too relaxed in mind for stronger and more substantial work, he employed himself on a picture-portrait of Madeleine.

“If I loved her less,” he reflected to himself, in days when confession of his thoughts would only have brought her pain, “my work would not be weakened by the absence of any sympathy with it. I know she means to be very good to me; and if I could but regard a wife as nothing more than an unpaid housekeeper, a drawing-room ornament, and a possible mother of children, there is no reason why I should not be very happy and very successful.”

Madeleine sat before him during long hours of the morning, and proved the most patient of models, till the lithe slight figure, the clear pale

oval face, the large cool eyes, and brilliant hair, came out upon the canvas.

“I am going to a ball in Bruton Street next Monday night, Maddy,” he said, one day. “If you care to go with me, it will be the easiest thing in the world to get an invitation; but Lady Bannockburn believes you do not go out.”

“I do not know her at all,” said Maddy. “No, thank you, Paul. I don’t think I should like it.”

There was silence, and he went on painting.

“Ringley wants me to go to-day with him and the Millingtons,—his Lowndes Square friends—” Paul said, another morning, “to the Exhibition of the Old Water Colour Society. Will you go with us, Maddy?”

“I am tired this morning,” answered Madeleine.

“Not listless, I hope,” rejoined Warner, in a tone which was not unkind.

Again, another day, he said,—“Have you been reading the *Spanish Gypsy*, which Mudie sent last week, Maddy?”

"Yes, a little."

"How do you think it compares with George Eliot's novels? This, you know, is her first poem. Is it equal to *The Mill on the Floss*? Is the character-painting half as true?"

"It is not so long as that," said Madeleine; "but it is very dreadful and sad."

"Poor Maddy!" thought Warner, as she left the room, and he put by his brushes. "Criticism is not her strong point."

Then there came back to him the memory of a blissful hour at Folkestone; when, on a late September evening, her face had borrowed a glory from reddening sky and golden sea. He had looked at her with something of rapture then, and had called her perfect.

"Oh, no! I am only a simple little girl who loves you very much." That had been her quiet modest answer, given without thought of coming change or coming disaster.

"Only a simple little girl who loves me very much. Yes: she was right," thought Paul, "and I was wrong, and a fool!"

CHAPTER XVII.

IF the season had an influence on Warner, it had also an influence, though of another kind, on Kate. When Belgravia is amusing itself, Bond Street is sure to be busy; and West End trade, which ministers to luxury, is pursued till late and resumed early.

The season left Kate little time for thinking either of amateur theatricals or of the regular pursuit of the dramatic art. She was eminently practical, and not even the remembrance of her success in the farce could induce her to neglect her daily task of sewing in the work-room and selling in the shop.

But now July had drawn to a close. The fashionable world—duly supplied with corsets—had left the West End streets and squares,

and was scattered over the country and abroad. The stress of work was over. Madame Rose, whose temper had been sorely tried by the impatience of her customers and by what she thought the slowness of her assistants, now felt happier, as in moments of leisure she inspected the account-books in the almost deserted shop, and the milk of human kindness rose visibly in her being when she assured herself that her business had been not only large but exceedingly profitable. "Madame Rose's connection," Kate was wont to say, "will have only the best and can afford to pay for it." And indeed one article of the "Court corset-maker's" creed was that the upper classes enjoyed paying a high price for everything they bought; and Madame Rose not unnaturally reasoned that this was a pleasure she had not the heart to deny them.

In the beginning of August Kate was informed that she might take a holiday and be absent for a month. This was good news, and Kate arranged to stay away from the 15th.

She at once communicated with the manager who had seen her act with Charley's company of amateurs ; and she did it through Charley's advice. He wrote a note in answer, which surprised our Kate and made her parents almost think that she must be a person of importance.

*" Piccadilly Theatre,
9th of August, 1868.*

" MADAM,—

" I HAVE your note, offering to join my company for a month here, without salary, or to go into the provinces with any part of it : with a view, as you intimate, to train for the profession. The proposal must have arisen from a mistaken impression conveyed to you by your relative, Mr. Hassell. This theatre is not a training-place ; and by the time any lady is fit to act here, she must receive a salary for doing so.

" I get so many applications from aspirants for theatrical honours that I cannot undertake, as a rule, to answer them either personally or through my secretary. But as your spirited

though very crude performance with some amateurs induced me to compliment your relatives—and thereby possibly to raise expectations which I never intended to excite—I make an exception in your case, and proceed to offer a word of advice.

“Before attempting to obtain an engagement at a London theatre, it is usual not only to receive instruction in elocution, as you tell me you have recently done, but also to go through a probationary period in the provinces. This is necessary for several reasons, one of which is that it familiarises the theatrical novice with a wide range of characters.

“I say this for your guidance, in the event of your determining to adopt the theatrical profession—a determination which I cannot undertake the responsibility of advising.”

“I am, Madam,

“Your obedient servant,

“COLMAN BAVIL.”

“MISS KATE LEMON.”

“He’s a civil chap,” said Kate’s step-father, “though a proud ’un, I should say, into the bargain. Well, Kate, if you’ve got any pluck in you, you’ll ask Charley to go and see him after that.”

“I don’t see how that would show much pluck,” answered Kate; “but I’ll do it by all means.”

“Look sharp, then.”

Charley was asked, and Charley—glad to go “behind the scenes”—consented. First, however, it was necessary to write a note to the manager. Kate wrote it.

*“High Street, Notting Hill, W.,
August 10th, 1868.*

“DEAR SIR,—

“I AM very much obliged for your favour, received last evening, and my mother desires me to thank you kindly.

“I am sorry to trouble you, but there is one part of your letter which we do not quite understand, and I should be very much obliged if you

would kindly allow my cousin to call on you for a few minutes, and explain it to him."

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"KATE LEMON."

"COLMAN BAVIL, ESQ."

Next day the postman brought to Notting Hill the following answer :—

"*T. R. Piccadilly,*

11th of August, 1868.

"MADAM,—

"Your request is unusual ; but I will endeavour to spare five minutes if your relative will call at the stage-door, at nine o'clock to-morrow evening."

"Your obedient servant,

"COLMAN BAVIL."

"MISS KATE LEMON."

When Charley Hassell approached the stage-door, he became a little frightened. It was an unwonted expedition, and the land

that lay behind the private portals of the great West End theatres was an undiscovered country.

Colman Babil, too, was a celebrated personage, and it was almost a distinction to possess his autograph. He had only been a manager for the last couple of years, but as an actor he had long been known. Often had Charley sat in the pit to witness with admiration, in that very Piccadilly Theatre, his performance of the hero of some modern drama. When he appeared on the stage, there was a roar of applause from gallery to floor. When the curtain fell, he was sure to be recalled, and would bring on the "leading lady"—perhaps it might be the great Miss Kettering—to receive the cheers of the public. Charley had been accustomed to behold this personage in various costumes and various situations, romantic and sensational, on the stage; but the prospect of meeting him alone, in a private room behind the scenes, caused a flutter of excitement to the young amateur.

"Can I see Mr. Bavi ?" asked Charley, of the porter who guarded the stage-door.

"No."

"I came to see him."

"Very likely. So do dozens of people, and go away again."

"But I expected to see him."

"Do you know him ?"

"No."

"Then you must please to go away. 'Can't have gentlemen standing here at the stage-door. It's against our rules."

"He told me to come here."

"What do you say ?"

"Why, that I have an appointment with him," rejoined Charley, plucking up confidence.

"Then you should have said so at first, sir. Walk in here, if you please. Take a chair for a minute. What name shall I say, sir ?"

"Hassell."

"Very good, sir. The governor don't act to-night, sir. I shall find him in his private room, I daresay."

“Thank you,” said Charley, both amused and relieved at the porter’s change of tone and of behaviour.

In a couple of minutes the porter returned, and sat down in his accustomed place.

“Mr. Bavi will see you in a quarter of an hour. He’s so busy, you see. Mr. Kent, who wrote the piece they are playing now, is with him. They always have a chat together, when Mr. Kent is in the house.”

“Mr. Bavi has plenty to do, I should think,” said Charley.

“Lord! I should think so! You won’t fancy I wanted to be rude to you in telling you to go away. But I’m bound to look sharp. We have two sorts of plagues at this here door, you see. Two different sorts of gentlemen.”

“What are they?” asked Charley.

“Swells and seedy chaps,” answered the porter. “The swells come to look after the young ladies: and Mr. Bavi won’t have none of that. The governor is very particular. I have strict orders to allow no one to stand here ;

and when they want to scrape acquaintance, I tell them I should lose my place if I gave them an address out of the address-book, which is under my charge. Never allowed, you see : neither for love or bribery."

Charley laughed, and said " Quite right too. But who are the 'seedy chaps?' "

" Dramatic authors that want to be. Why I must have carried in cartloads of blue paper parcels, tied up in pink tape, since I've been porter here. That's the plays in manuscript'. And manuscript' they remain ! Then, you see, the seedy gentlemen are always calling and wanting an answer ; and when I tell them there *is* no answer, 'they'll call again.' Bless your heart ! How could Mr. Babil ever find time to read their dramas ? But they will leave them here."

" Poor fellows !" thought Charley, " I dare-say they expect to have some attention paid to them." Then he remembered that he had heard of two or three briefless barristers writing comedies which had never been produced, and

that he had known two or three barristers' clerks who had written farces which the manager's desk had swallowed, and of which no tidings had ever been received.

While he sat in the porter's little office-room, people passed in and out by the swing-door in the passage, a yard or two from the outer door which opened on a back-street. Now, it was a carpenter going away, having done his part in the evening's scene-shifting. Now, a stout man arrived, hot and puffing; telling the porter that his Hammersmith omnibus had broken down, and asking if he were in time.

"He only goes on in the last act, which begins at half-past nine: that is, in ten minutes or somewhere thereabouts," said the porter, as the hurried comedian rushed along to the dressing-rooms.

Then a withered-looking woman, in a dirty grey shawl, appeared at the entrance, and asked if Miss Lucy de Vere had finished.

"Due in five minutes, when the curtain

falls on this act, as you know, marm. She comes out directly, having no change of dress."

"She appears in morning-dress, you know, Mr. Perkins," explained Miss de Vere's mother, with theatrical sensitiveness, lest the porter's remark might be misconstrued. And, though she nominally addressed the excellent Perkins, the remark was intended for the benefit of Charley Hassell.

"Will the manager be long?" asked Charley, when the act was over, and Miss de Vere, closely muffled, had joined her parent.

"I daresay he will," answered the porter. "Your time's not valuable to-night, I hope, sir?"

"I can wait very well," said Charley, who, in truth, was getting rather impatient.

"This week's *Era*, at your service," said Perkins, proffering the leading theatrical journal.

"Thanks."

And Charley took the paper, and began a diligent study of its contents.

Time went on. Presently, a carriage, which

had been slowly moving up and down the back-street, drew up, empty, to the door. The coachman was probably in the habit of arriving at a particular hour."

"Ten o'clock," said Charley, looking at the time-piece, and then out of the side-window into the little street.

"Yes : she'll be out in a minute or two," Perkins remarked.

"Who ?"

"Miss Kettering. That's enough for you, sir, I s'pose. Everybody has heard of *her*, I should say."

And a minute afterwards, a tall slight figure, veiled, and dressed in black, passed along the passage.

"Good night, Perkins," were words which came from behind the veil, as the figure stopped for an instant : "your wife better to-night ?"

"Yes, thank you, miss ; much obliged to you, miss," answered the porter, with evident satisfaction.

He ran to open the carriage-door and close

it after her, and in a moment the great actress had departed.

"The governor will be disengaged, I expect," said the man, coming back; "as only the farce is to come now. I'll go and see."

But, just as he was starting, a middle-aged man—who was well-bred, if a moment's behaviour could show him to be, and well dressed, if a view by the dim gaslight at the porter's desk could be trusted—made the enquiry whether Mr. Babil were visible.

"What name shall I say, sir?"

"I have no card to-night. Greyling. Mr. Edwin Greyling, say."

"Very good, sir," Perkins answered, moving off.

"Greyling!" thought Charley. "That was Kate's cousin's name, before she married. I wonder if he is any relation of hers. At any rate, he looks to me one of the swells."

The porter returned.

"Walk up with me, sir, if you please. Up these here stairs. He will see you at once."

Charley was not particularly gratified to be still in the background ; but as this gentleman's visit might be one of urgent business, while his own promised interview with the manager was one accorded through courtesy, he made no sign of dissatisfaction. But he had evidently fallen in the estimation of the porter, who busied himself with the evening newspaper.

In ten minutes, the gentleman who had given the name of Greyling re-appeared at the door.

“ Mr. Babil asked me to mention that he is disengaged,” said he to the porter.

“ Thank 'ee, sir.” Then, turning to Charley, as the other visitor passed into the street, the porter added,—“ That's for you. Step up, sir, if you please.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE manager's room was a disorderly but comfortable apartment, something like a bachelor's sitting-room and something like a lawyer's private office.

A rather faded Turkey carpet covered most of the floor. Venetian blinds were let down over the open window, through which there came such wafts of air as London knows the value of, on a hot August night. The broad mantel-piece was piled with curiosities which Mr. Babil had collected during professional tours in England and holiday journeys abroad. The walls were hung with a few water-colours of various classes of our English school—a Varley, a Morland, a Turner, a Prout—and a heavy book-case, full of volumes of theatrical

records and the whole published series of the *British Drama*, stood on each side of the now empty fireplace. Two easy chairs, covered with dark leather, were placed in front of the book-cases; a couch was drawn out a little way from the side-wall; and on the centre table, which was strewn with newspapers, manuscripts, pens, and paper-knives, there stood a sloping desk, in front of which was stationed the manager's writing-chair.

Here sat Mr. Bavi1 : a man of forty-eight or forty-nine; with closely shaven face, a large nose slightly arched, a delicate mouth, keen brown eyes, and well-marked eyebrows. Over his forehead fell stray locks of thin iron-grey hair. He was tall, and though he now stooped a little, his figure was still good.

There was a knock at the door, and Mr. Bavi1 said "Come in;" whereupon the porter ushered young Hassell into the manager's presence.

"Sit down," said Mr. Bavi1 to Charley, who was scarcely at his ease. "We can talk better.

I have ten minutes to give you, and am sorry to have kept you waiting so long."

"Don't mention it," Charley said, taking one of the easy chairs—the only seats which were available—while Mr. Babil moved from his writing-chair into the other. It was evidently the manager who was to sustain the conversation, and he began at once.

"I can perhaps give you a little advice with regard to Miss Lemon"—actors learn so much by heart that they never forget a surname—"if you will tell me in a word what it is in my note that she does not understand."

"The truth is," explained Charley, "Miss Lemon cannot make sure whether or not you would advise her to adopt the stage as a profession."

"How could I do so, when so much depends on private circumstances, of which I know nothing, and with which I really could not undertake to make myself acquainted?"

"But you do not advise her against it?"

"How could I? The only time I saw her

act, she acted well. Very crudely, but with a good deal of vivacity. Still there must be something in her. She would make, one day or other, a very fair *soubrette*. A *soubrette* is a stage chambermaid, you understand. If she could sing we should call her a 'singing chambermaid.' "

But Charley, deeply read in the *Èra*, already understood the terms. The manager continued.

"This is a matter for her own consideration. She had better consult with her friends. You are a young man with a liking for the stage, I presume. She had better take the advice of somebody else."

The manager laughed at his own wit, and so Charley Hassell laughed too.

"I daresay that's very true," said Charley. "Still, you see, sir, I want *some* advice for her."

"All I can say is, that if she thinks it worth while to go upon the stage she will do—at all events, in a certain class of part—as well as

most of my young ladies here. You will not imagine that I am offering her an engagement."

"Certainly not."

"If she decides to take the step—and remember I won't advise it—she ought to go into the provinces. It is better than beginning at a minor house in London : one never shakes off the odour of Queen Victoria's Own, or of any of the places at the East End or over the water. In the provinces there are all kinds of theatres, from barns, that remind you of Hogarth's *Strolling Actresses*, to almost model theatres where I have played, in Manchester and Liverpool. Miss Lemon, however, would have to begin in a very small one, and should think herself happy to receive no salary, but to be allowed to act two characters each week. Here we can only change the bill once in five or six months. She would be promoted gradually to better theatres, getting a salary before long, and if she did well she should be in London in a couple of years—I mean as a *soubrette*, you understand. Amateur critics

might tell you a different story; but I know the stage, and I declare that it takes two years to make a fair *soubrette* and eight or ten to make a good *comédienne*—such an artist as Miss Kettering, for example. Of course there are exceptional cases, but they are very rare.”

“How should Miss Lemon begin, sir, to obtain an engagement?”

“Advertise in the paper, and answer advertisements of country managers, I suppose. But stay! I know a man who is wanting two or three young ladies for a watering-place, to open—to begin, that means—on the 1st of September. Give me Miss Lemon’s address again: I have not kept her notes.”

Charley gave it.

“There!” said Mr. Bavi, sliding the scrap of paper into his desk. “If within a week she should decide to go upon the stage, she must write me a line, and I will tell this man. But this is a mere chance, you understand, which should not influence her determination one way or the other. Now, good evening.”

“ Good night. Thank you, sir, very much,” said Charley, as he left the room, and the manager resumed his seat at the desk.

Charley thought Mr. Babil very good-natured, and Mr. Babil thought Kate much more clever than he had ventured to say.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE interview with the manager was generally considered satisfactory. It raised hopes in Kate, delighted Charley, made proud the elder Hassell, and went far to silence the objections of his spouse. That so great a man as the manager should also be so gracious, said much for the impression which the young lady's performance had made upon him. Two days after the memorable interview in Mr. Bavi's room at the Piccadilly Theatre, the die was cast, —Kate was to be an actress.

A short note from Miss Lemon informed the manager that she would be glad of an introduction to his professional brother in the country. Mr. Bavi did not personally answer this communication, but a note from his secretary

acknowledged its receipt and promised that it should receive attention.

A day or two later, an unwonted apparition might have been seen at Mrs. Hassell's door. It was a hansom—common enough at Notting Hill, but not so immediately in front of her own modest dwelling—and from it there descended two very different figures. A little rickety old man, dressed carelessly and shabbily, was the first to alight. He was followed by a burly middle-aged gentleman, at whose descent the floor of the hansom went up with a bound. As he stood in the High Street, disinterring loose sixpences from the tomb of his deep waistcoat pocket, it might have been noticed that his face was red and heavy, his gloved hands large and fat, his raiment gorgeous but unfashionable.

He advanced first to the door, rang the thin-voiced bell, and as the limited capacity of the knocker, when he had tested it, did not satisfy him, he supplemented these announcements of his presence by rapping on the door with his umbrella-handle. Meanwhile, the little man

put on a pair of spectacles and surveyed the departing cabman, who had grumbled, and then the shops and houses of the immediate neighbourhood.

In a minute, the door was opened by the slatternly maid-servant, and the burly gentleman having enquired for Miss Lemon, both visitors found themselves in occupation of Mrs. Hassell's narrow passage, from which they were at once transferred to the parlour.

As it was Saturday afternoon, Kate would have been at home even if her holiday-time had not been just commencing. She was now in her bed-room, loosely dressed, and with her hair about her shoulders. Kate was going out to tea with some friends of her mother's. Sending down word that she would soon be with her visitors, she—while rapidly arraying herself—left them in possession of the little parlour, with whatever scanty entertainment they could derive from the prints upon the wall, the cheap ornaments on the mantel-piece, some wax flowers under a glass shade, and two photographic

albums containing full-length portraits of the Hassell family and their connections in Sunday attire.

Soon Kate appeared. She had read on the only card sent up to her the name "Mr. Buckingham Crabbe." He was the lessee of a Yorkshire theatre, and the wizened little man, not of sufficient importance to have a card of his own, was his stage-manager, Mr. Andrews.

The two visitors having for a minute or so silently surveyed the apartment, Mr. Crabbe remarked to his subordinate, "These people are not in the profession, Andrews : neither the girl nor her relations."

"Probably not," said the stage-manager : "probably not. At least, that is what we are told."

"She will suit me, or Baviel would not have sent us here. Shall I propose terms to her myself, do ye think?"

The manager was rash, and might possibly have proposed too liberal terms. In such dangerous circumstances, Andrews was of

infinite service to him. Not only did the little man well earn his salary of two hundred a year by performing his duties as stage-director ; he also displayed in a most exemplary manner the commercial virtue of stinginess, and in the course of the season he saved Mr. Crabbe twice the amount of his salary, by his influence on the payments made to members of the company. He had now come out to Notting Hill to see his chief safely through a bargain with Kate Lemon.

“ No, sir—no, sir ! If I may be allowed to suggest, hear her own proposals first, by all means.”

Kate entered before Mr. Crabbe could reply. He nodded his head to her, rather than bowed. The little old man did not even attempt to salute her, but stood in quiet and keen inspection of the fresh young face and figure.

“ I am Mr. Crabbe,” that gentleman said : “ you have my card already.”

“ Yes, sir.”

"Miss Kate Lemon, I presume?" said the little Mr. Andrews, by way of precaution.

"Yes. It was I who was enquired for," answered Kate.

"Quite right—quite right!" exclaimed the subordinate, apologetically. "It is Mr. Crabbe, not I, young lady, who will negotiate with you."

Kate turned to the gentleman indicated, and he spoke forthwith.

"I hear from Mr. Babil that you've never been upon the stage."

"No; never, sir."

"And that you are open to an engagement by way of trial?"

"Yes," said Kate: "I should be very glad indeed."

"My theatre in the West Riding being closed for the recess, I open at Scarborough on the 1st—Monday fortnight, I mean—in an assembly-room engaged for the purpose, and quite fit for it too. I do not interfere with the permanent theatre there. Mine is an independent speculation. 'Live, and let live,' I say.

Well, I want one or two young ladies, of prepossessing appearance,"—Kate blushed—"for minor parts. They must make themselves good useful people, or they would be precious little service to me. You might, perhaps, play two parts each week : each one about three times, ye see. And we have rehearsals almost every day, owing to the frequent change in the bill."

"Mr. Crabbe's young ladies learn a very great deal while they are with him : a great deal of their profession," observed little Mr. Andrews. "Oh, an immense deal!"

"How long could you stay with me, if we suited each other?"

"You know, sir, I am in business," Kate replied readily. "My holiday only lasts a fortnight after the 1st of September. Perhaps I might get another fortnight, though : that would be my third, for my holiday begins to-day. Yes, certainly I could, at that time of the year, by giving up my salary for those two weeks. It is a slack time. I would still keep my situation, you understand, sir."

"A matter of arrangement—quite a matter of arrangement, miss," said the stage-director from the background. "Mr. Crabbe need not be troubled with this sort of thing. Bear in mind, Miss—Miss—I really beg your pardon—"

"Lemon," said Kate.

"Ah! I knew it was something sharp. Bear in mind, Miss Lemon, that unless you could promise Mr. Crabbe a month, it would be impossible for him to think of treating with you."

"Yes, you must stay a month, if you please," remarked Buckingham Crabbe himself.

"Well, then, I will say a month, sir. I suppose I couldn't give it a fair trial in less."

"You couldn't give it a fair trial in less," echoed the little stage-manager. "In justice to yourself, if you really wish to find out whether you possess talent. You really owe it to yourself, miss—to yourself."

"Well now"—it was Crabbe who spoke—"you make no objection to signing the usual agreement of course."

“Oh, no!”

Here little Andrews raised his right forefinger, as if to call particular attention to the words of wisdom which were about to fall from him.

“Only, you see, miss, instead of engaging for first old woman, or juvenile lead, or singing chambermaid—specifying, you understand, as ladies in the profession often do—you sign to play any part assigned to you by Mr. Crabbe, in the exercise of his discretion.”

“Yes, I suppose so: Mr. Bavi! being a friend of Mr. Crabbe’s,” answered Kate, naïvely.

“Then as to terms,” suggested Crabbe, “your views are very moderate, I hope.”

“Oh, certainly! Mr. Bavi! told me salary should not be the main question at first. But I should like *something*.”

“Naturally, naturally!” said Mr. Andrews, in quite a sympathetic voice. He often gained his point by appearing to yield, or at all events to concur; and Crabbe, seeing that the difficult

moment had arrived, left the question in his subordinate's hands. He did so by saying, "Well now, I really should have thought, no salary to begin with, Miss Lemon; but as my friend Mr. Andrews seems to understand your views, you may settle it together."

Kate was quick enough to feel that this was not to her advantage, but though generally sharp in matters of business it was now her chief aim to get a good trial on the stage. Fair payment could not but follow, she thought, upon a fair success.

"A beginner usually pays to act, you know," said Andrews, very blandly.

"Indeed!"

"Oh, yes! Yes, certainly. But you are very luckily circumstanced. Mr. Bavi's introduction of you to Mr. Crabbe gives you an immense advantage. If you could promise to remain, if you suited Mr. Crabbe, he might give you a salary in October and November. He might strain a point to do it, supposing of course that he should want you to stay."

"No. I could not promise," said Kate. "But if I should succeed, I daresay I should wish to stay, myself."

"Just so, just so! We quite understand each other. That will be a matter of arrangement at the time, except that you will be so kind, Miss Lemon, as to guarantee now that if you do remain on the stage at all, after the first month, Mr. Crabbe shall have your services, if he should remain at Scarborough, and wish them. The salary to be fixed now. That gives you an immense advantage. Oh, an immense advantage, I assure you! For only your complete failure in the first month would be likely to interfere with your remaining at a most satisfactory salary. Say, twenty shillings a week during October, and twenty-five during November, if Mr. Crabbe (out of kindness) should make an effort to re-engage you for that month."

"I get as much in Bond Street," said Kate, "and shall soon get more: what with partial board, and—"

"Very likely, very likely. And on the stage too, Miss, you would soon get more unless you were a failure. And really you cannot expect Mr. Crabbe—though he is generosity itself—to pay you for being a failure, Miss. It would be unreasonable. Oh, thoroughly unreasonable!"

A little honest indignation served Mr. Andrews's purpose here, and Kate soon said she would agree to his proposition, provided her parents did. Now, as Mr. Hassell was in favour of her plan, this was almost certain. And the manager and his subordinate knew it to be so.

They bade good-bye to Kate with the air of two benefactors—arranging to see her a couple of days thence—and Andrews congratulated his chief, as they walked away from the house.

"You see, sir, she must be good, or Bavi would not have recommended her to you—better, after a single week's work, than many you would have to pay, probably. You get her free for the first month—the best of your

season—and you can send her away at the end of it. Or if you keep open the Queen's Rooms at Scarborough, and happen to want her, the terms are nominal—twenty shillings a week at a time when if you want her at all she must be worth three or four pounds to you. Then at the end of that month, again, you have the liberty of sending her away ; or if you want to keep the place open while *you* are beginning our regular season at home, she is bound to stay. That's the state of things."

"The bargain is all in my favour," remarked Crabbe, somewhat gleefully.

"We might have done worse," said Andrews, with an expression of modest content : "yes, we might perhaps have done a trifle worse for you, sir."

Charley Hassell was out of town for a day or two, or he would probably have liked to assist at this interview. On Monday the agreement was signed, and on Tuesday Charley returned, and read Kate's copy of it.

"Why, what the mischief have you been

doing, Kate, while I have been away? You; so quick and clever too!"

"Every one must be taken in at some time or other," urged Kate in extenuation. "At least, Madame Rose says so, and she's not often caught. Besides, the main thing is for me to get a fair trial, you know. It's not as if I were going to stick at Scarborough for ever. Besides, if I fail I shall come back without paying anything; and if I succeed I'm only bound to them for two months more, and shall get a salary for the two months, remember, Charley."

"That's only one way of looking at it. It will cost you more if you succeed than if you fail. If you succeed, and Mr. Crabbe's watering-place season pays him a profit, you stay two months more in lodgings at Scarborough, getting a salary that can't possibly meet your expenses. You have actually engaged to pay for succeeding. I know you are not to pay for failure; but if they had had any fear of your failing, they would have taken good care to protect themselves from losing by it. As it is, it serves

their purpose far better to make sure of gaining everything by your success. Why, Kate, they couldn't have done you so if they had been buying stays of you!"

"No, indeed, for I know my own business."

"And you're new to this. Well, make the best of it; but promise that when you've suffered and paid for being such a 'catch' to them, you'll let *me* have a look at your next engagement."

CHAPTER XX.

IN the ordinary course of things at this time of the year, Kate would have gone, and Mr. and Mrs. Hassell with her, to spend a fortnight at Margate or at Southend, after the manner of their class. It was a fresh experience to her to be going far away to Scarborough, with the certainty of a month's absence. And then there was the chance of an absence longer still; nay, of giving up Bond Street and its corset-making altogether, and of winning her bread in a strange new fashion. These thoughts occupied and excited Kate, and they made her forget Madeleine.

It was arranged that Mrs. Hassell should go down to Scarborough with her daughter, a week before the first of September; and that

on the first, Charley Hassell should begin his fortnight's holiday, and spend it with them in the North. They would be glad of his assistance, and this, too, happened to be the most convenient time for his brief vacation. He obtained it without trespassing too much on the good will of his employer, who at that moment was shaking off at Baden the dust of courts by Lincoln's Inn and the impression of adverse decisions due to the wisdom of our three Vice-Chancellors.

At Scarborough, a couple of rooms, which the lodging-house keeper called quiet and comfortable, but which Kate pronounced to be dirty, were secured upon the North Cliff, far from the gaiety and movement of the Spa. Kate and her mother arrived tired with seven hours of journeying in the "second class." Rehearsals were to commence two mornings afterwards, and, in the meantime, Kate and Mrs. Hassell were free to inspect the place.

The day after their advent, Kate bathed on the great stretch of yellow sands bound into

firm treading-ground by the North Sea tide. Afterwards, she climbed alone to the Castle Hill, and to the castle itself, where honest George Fox was a prisoner, and walked past the old church, where Anne Brontë lies buried. Then, in the evening, our two Londoners betook themselves to the Spa—the great promenade at the foot of the wooded and terraced gardens which ornament the South Cliff's slope towards the sea. It was even better than Margate, Kate allowed, as she took in at a glance the broad bay and heaving waters, and the masses of men and women who walked and laughed, talked and stared, on the level breadth of promenade.

Society of all kinds is to be observed upon the Spa, for Scarborough is not exclusive. She is not at all particular about your name and birth, but her doors—as the cynic says in *Locksley Hall*—"open but to golden keys." A practised eye would have perceived at once—and Kate Lemon did perceive, with the sharpness bred of Bond Street dealing—that

the greater portion of the loungers on the Spa were people not in London society.

There was the prosperous farmer, from the Wolds by Flamborough, with his giggling daughters ; there was the Manchester manufacturer, with a rising family to be told off by the half-dozen ; there was the slowly-withering spinster, who lived at Harrogate, and came to a Scarborough hotel for August and September, to see if she might not yet "go off," thanks to the stimulating sociability of the freest of watering-places ; there, talking the broadest of broad country dialects, stood the mill-owner from Bradford or Halifax, who daily displayed his horses on the cliff, though he and his interesting offspring rode even worse than people ride in Rotten Row ; and there was the young shopkeeper, who had run up from Hull for a couple of days' "spree," and who might have been seen drinking champagne-cup in the early morning at the bar of his hotel.

But there were half-a-dozen faces more worthy of inspection. Wearing a loose shoot-

ing-jacket, buff sand-shoes, and a limp broad-brimmed hat, a thin, grey-bearded, care-worn man stood watching the humours and appearance of the crowd. He was a novelist and poet of thirty years' fame. Elsewhere, a stalwart swarthy man, of Oriental mien, inhaled with calm contentment the gentle breeze from the sea. He was a great banker from Vienna, and may have come to Scarborough to escape the attentions of German princes who were short of cash. Leaning over a balcony-rail, and listening to the band's interpretation of his own latest strains, might have been seen a composer, whose merit men doubted at first, because he was not a foreigner. Among the crowd, he saw one face he knew—that of a man who, in speaking in the House, spoke to an attentive audience, content to rush untimely from the dinner-tables.

These few were types. The mass of men and women were apparently of much less significance : people whose lives are hidden from the beholder—whose faces, seen to-day, are

forgotten to-morrow. "Superfluous figures," as George Eliot says, "crowding the canvas of life without adequate effect."

If Kate had had an eye for scenery—or, rather, if she had loved it as Madeleine did—she would have turned sooner away from the crowd upon the Spa, and would have earlier looked over the stone-work of the long sea-wall, and noticed the view. In its changing lights the landscape that evening was worthy of a Turner, a Troyon, or a Brett. Close to the wall, thronged the motley mass of pleasure-takers, while beyond it there was the olive-green sea, with a fleet of fishing-boats in the offing. Far away to the left, rose the steep Castle Hill, with the ruined keep at the top of it. Round the hill's base there nestled the little red-roofed fishing-town—the oldest part of Scarborough. Far to the right, the cliffs stretched out, with Flamborough Head in the furthest distance. Of those cliffs, some were grass-covered, others were rugged and bare. They were dark green and dark grey when the

sun was behind the clouds : they glistened bright when the sun shone fully ; but the best was when his rays just slanted or struck across the landscape, lighting up out of the general greyness some point of rock and line of water.

When most of the evening visitors had left, Kate with her mother still lingered. They and the superintendent had it almost all to themselves. The lamps, lighted at dusk—round the balcony and all along the terrace—were being extinguished. From the dark deserted place, before leaving it, Kate looked out to the broad sea and the little far-off fishing-boats, with lanterns glimmering at their masts. Then she turned to see the cheerful gaslights of the town, and the dim outline of the great hill-side beyond.

Though she had spent it amid scenes which were new, this was the last evening of an old life and a familiar one. She was to begin again on the morrow, in another and a more eventful way. There was an end of twenty years of bright and innocent and simple life. Kate neither cherished sentiments nor luxu-

riated in emotions, but it would have been wonderful if on a night like this, our little London shop-girl, with her quick brain and earnest heart, had not looked out with feelings fuller than of old upon the strange great world of Nature—dark earth, and moving clouds, and restless sea.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE London summer ran its weary course, with its days of close thick heat and rain and its brooding thunder-storms, and when September came, with fresher atmosphere, Paul Warner found that little work had been conceived and little accomplished.

The portrait of Madeleine was finished, indeed ; but it did not satisfy the painter. It was too completely a transcript from the life : too little a work of thoughtful Art. A photographer would have done as much, Warner considered, and he spoke of it to Ringley in no self-flattering strain.

“ Look at the thing ! It is not my business to reproduce the mere colour of the hair and lines of the features. That sort of thing may do very well to make a pretty picture ; but we

painters want more than that. We want that, understand, but we want more."

"You will get it some day," said Ringley, in encouragement. But Warner pursued his lamentations.

"The art of portraiture does not consist—and surely I need not tell you so—in stereotyping upon canvas, after weeks or months of work, the look that a face wore for a single moment. It is something better than the craft of a copyist. It consists in recognition more than in imitation. To paint a good portrait, one should read character well: one should have the keenest insight. Perhaps I cannot read character; yet surely I ought to know my wife. Assume, if you will, that I do know her, and then the fault becomes mainly one of expression. Strange incapacity! Yet certainly I have not succeeded in concentrating into this picture the leading traits of a character with which I ought to be penetrated. This is not my wife at all, but a pretty girl who resembles her in feature and form."

"I tell you, it is life-like."

"Yes—as a photograph is. But you understand me. Can a man be satisfied with this sort of work?"

"That depends very much on the man. And dissatisfaction need not be any greater proof of wisdom than self-approval would be."

"But I used to do much better than this. I know I did. My *Mary in the House of John* was the work of quite another man. I am not a mere boy, Ringley, who dreams that he can paint, and when there is nothing to show it, lives upon the illusion. I *have* painted, and in measuring myself by what I have done already—not by what I long to do and ought to do—I am applying a standard that is woefully correct."

"Well, we won't deprive you of your right to complain," rejoined Ringley, crossing the studio to look at a study in chalk. "Only remember this fact, that no man's progress can be unbroken. You must measure his course by periods, my dear fellow, not by hours. If he takes two

steps to the front, he may take one step backwards, without any reasonable cause for dissatisfaction. Say that this is your step backwards. Forwards, now ! ”

But this encouragement was of little avail. Besides, Ringley was quite aware that Warner's married life had produced an effect—and not a beneficial one—upon his work. For he had known Warner before and since his marriage, and he had seen enough of his friend's wife to discover the source of the discord. He was now rapidly resuming his old opinion that Madeleine was not a fit companion for a painter who loved his work, and who expected those who surrounded him in close relationship to take in a noble art some intelligent interest.

Once, on the wedding-day, Ringley had imagined better of Madeleine, but now he fell rapidly into the train of thought, which, alas ! was becoming Warner's own—the thought that Nature had meant her for a dutiful daughter, a blindly trusting wife, perhaps a doating mother, too, and little else. He saw in her a woman fit

for the times of chivalry, when all that husbands asked of wives was beauty and affection, but little fit, indeed, for days of more equal yokes, when women who might have been heroines for Roland or Cœur de Lion, must, as it were, in commotion of the waters, be thrown up helpless and valueless, on a shelving bank, passed and forgotten by the tide of modern energy and culture, sweeping to success.

Now that September was come, Warner thought it well to take his wife away from London, and wherever he went with her it would be for her sake more than for his own.

"Where shall we go?" asked Paul, with the rest of the world, at that epoch.

"Need it be to the seaside?" said Madeleine. "I do not much care about it."

"That is well," observed the husband, who had already had enough of the dull amusements of our watering-places. "To tell you the truth," he continued, "I had not looked forward with vivid pleasure to the probable visit to Eastbourne or Worthing, with the dreary round of lodging-

house life—promenading, driving, eating, and staring at one's neighbours. What in the world could be more stupid than that! Its only advantage would be that it would make us appreciate our home, on returning to it."

"We need do nothing of that sort, dear Paul," said Madeleine, softly and kindly; "I want you to enjoy your holiday. Where would you like to go?"

"Just where you would. You would not care to leave England this autumn."

"I should speak French so badly, Paul. How could I get on? O! some day I should like to go abroad, you know; but not just now, I think."

"The next best change is to go to our cathedral-towns; but we did that directly we were married, when we saw Rochester and Canterbury. To the man, who the week before he visits them, has been jostling his acquaintances in the Strand, these tranquil, dreamy places—such as Salisbury, Wells, or, on the continent, Abbeville—must answer the purpose

of an entire change. Why, the very blood runs slower there, while you saunter along the shady side of the way, with an air of laziness and assured leisure."

"Let us go to them again, Paul."

"I do not want my blood to run slower, though. I want it to run faster, if anything. But think of the influence of those grey cathedral cities upon those who live in them. It must be better, a thousand times, than that of the manufacturing towns of the North, for in Wells and Salisbury every day is Sunday, and Sunday is not dull. In Bradford and Halifax—where our modern Puritans make money—every week-day is a market-day, and Sunday is the Sabbath!"

"I should dearly like to live at Wells," said Madeleine.

"But the great nuisance," rejoined Paul, "of diocesan cities—at least, to the visitor—is the inevitable verger, who takes you under his solemn guardianship directly you enter the church, and who, caring only for the shilling

with which you eventually get rid of him, repeats his parrot-like lecture on Bishop Brown's tomb and the Duke of Dumpshire's effigy in stone. One is, nevertheless, bound to admit that the nuisance is not quite confined to England, Maddy, for the most insufferable verger I ever met with was the old, the almost historic mumblor who would go with me round the church of St. Denis. The French call these men *Suisses*, you know. Is it because they are the paid retainers in a cause in which they have no interest?"

"What do you mean?" said simple Madeleine, who did not know that the Swiss had ever fought in any other battles than those for their own freedom.

"Read history a little," said Paul, with somewhat needless impatience. "But this is not settling where we are to go."

"You must decide, please," said Madeleine, who dreaded to see her husband other than satisfied. "I shall be quite content with whatever you may fix."

But Warner was not inclined to fix anything just then. It was not with much hope of receiving the stimulus he needed that he looked forward to a holiday. He had planned a holiday for Madeleine's health and Madeleine's pleasure, and he genuinely believed that if she could be got to enjoy it, he should enjoy it, too, though it might not do for him that which he required.

"I love her, perhaps, too absorbingly," said Paul, when irritability had passed away. "Why cannot a wife take in my mind the place she takes in the minds of so many men? She engrosses me too much. And if we go into the country—as go we must—I shall have her alone. Here in London one can divert one's thoughts, and get a little work done, if not very much. But some day or other I must have better stimulus, if I am not to fail utterly in the art for which I was born."

He met his wife an hour afterwards, at the little dinner-table for two, and thus announced his programme:—

"The truth is, you see, Madeleine, that you require one thing, and I, another. You ought to go to a capital place for your health, and drive and walk about there. After a long London summer, you deserve the open country air—the *grand air*, as they call it so well, across the Channel. I want to refresh myself with great pictures: I am longing for the Louvre again—the inexhaustible *salon carré* and the room where my Titians and Mantegnas are."

"Well, go abroad, dear Paul. I can stay here, you know."

"No, no: you certainly shall not stay here. Next week we will both go down to Dartmoor, and have a look at Devonshire scenery, together. You will enjoy that."

"Oh, yes, indeed! You know I shall."

"Then, when we come back, after a fortnight or so, I will go abroad by myself, and when I return from France or Italy I may have a clearer head for painting. Who knows, Madeleine! That may be the very thing to remake me."

“I do hope it will. Yes, it surely will. You will think of so many things.”

But first there was the fortnight amid the solitude of Dartmoor, for husband and wife who were not one in thought.

“Madeleine will see the sunsets,” said Paul, to himself, when he was again alone in the studio; “and each one will be sadder than the last to me, so long as my work lags behind.

‘For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the grey :
A whisper from the west
Shoots—*Add this to the rest,*
Take it and try its worth : here dies another day.’

Poor little Madeleine ! How I do care for her ! And now we are to be in the country together, alone. I know she loves me ; but what in the world can she teach me ! ”

He was disappointed because she gave him no intellectual support. But, if he had only known it, that need not have rendered her useless. Intellectual depth and brilliancy were not required as the complement of the qualities

which he possessed. These he had already : at least sufficiently. His was a tutored mind and an untutored heart. It might have been her woman's work to bring him into the moral air of simplicity and purity and tenderness. She had these things—and had them richly—and these were what he wanted. He came near to them, when they might have saved him. He passed them by.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE Dartmoor project was carried out exactly as it had been planned. Paul and Madeleine went down about the middle of September to Exeter ; travelling as far as Bristol upon the worst appointed line in England—the Great Western. The first night of their autumn tour was spent at Exeter, in an ancient and decayed hostelry near the Cathedral Close, where Paul remarked that the bedroom was musty, the food bad, and the waiter slipshod. Next morning, they sallied out to see the church, and Paul caused his wife to observe Bishop Grandison's screen, celebrated for its statues so numerous and entire.

From Exeter our tourists took the South Devon railway, and leaving it near the coast,

turned inland to Chagford: a village lying under Dartmoor, whither they were bound. At Prince's Town—a place of habitation surrounded by miles of dreary waste land—they took up their abode for a fortnight, and spent this fortnight in familiarising themselves with scenery which is unique and impressive, and in studying the habits of the convicts and their warders from the neighbouring prison—a prison the occupants of which are constantly employed in work upon the moor.

At first Madeleine enjoyed the freedom of the desolate country; and day after day Paul strode over the moor with rapid and determined step; exploring here and there; recognising the character of the landscape; and wishing, as now and again he met some stray Devonians, that they were better subjects for a tired pencil. Before the holiday closed, Madeleine longed that it were over, for she saw that her husband was weary of solitude, and she wished him to execute his project of going abroad, to one at least of the great

cities of the Continent, rich in the materials which create or nourish thought and give strength and quality to artistic work.

"Paul," she said to him, after they had returned to Craven Hill, in the early part of October, and when he was upon the very point of departure; "never feel that you must come back to me before you have turned your absence to good account. I do so dread to be a drag upon you. Write to me often, though, for I can't help feeling that I shall be rather lonely. Write as if you were talking to me."

"Perhaps I may be back next week. Who knows? You may see me much sooner than you expect, Maddy."

"And you *will* miss me?" she asked, with one hand laid on his arm.

Touched by her tenderness, he kissed her, and the thought "Shall I go at all?" rose in his mind, though it found no utterance. The unspoken answer was quickly given. His things were collected, the carriage was at the

door, the Continental train would leave the station in about forty minutes. One rapid "good-bye" and the parting was over: Paul had started, with tears in his eyes, upon the self-appointed task that was to help him in his work.

Madeleine shut the house-door herself, when the sound of his carriage-wheels had vanished, and passed from room to room with a restlessness which was new to her. In the drawing-room there was nothing of her husband's, and she left it—did she wish to realise his presence now that he was gone, and would some relic help her? In the little dining-room there were still the plates and glasses, used for his last hurried meal before the journey by evening and night. The studio was more truly his own, and there, among the easels, the casts, and the tapestry, Madeleine resolved to sit.

But it was impossible to do anything in the way of settled work. She went about again after two vain attempts, and found some things that had been left out by mistake. There was

a spoilt brush, and there was a scrap of paper on which an accurate hand had drawn, firmly and well, some lines of simple drapery. Madeleine could not look at them with an unmoved face, but her tears were not the tears of selfish disappointment.

“Will he ever be happy with me?” she murmured to herself. “Can I ever be the wife he ought to have?”

But that was a tone of depression, and it was gone by the morrow. A bright autumnal morning—with dry brown leaves chasing each other in the garden, with a clear high sky, and a crisp fresh breeze—found Madeleine in better spirits, cheerfully issuing her little household orders, and then walking alone to church with as happy a face as circumstances would permit.

“Paul will be at Calais,” she thought, “and I shall hear to-morrow morning. He said he had never stopped there before. What will he have to tell?”

On Monday morning the knock of the

postman was awaited anxiously, and, from the letter-box, Madeleine extracted the thin foreign envelope with Napoleon's stamp.

“ *Hôtel Dessin, Calais,*
Sunday Evening, 11th Oct., 1868.

“ MY DEAR MADELEINE,

“ As you wanted to hear about my passage, you will gladly know that it was a good one. I am happy to be able to dismiss it with so brief a notice.

“ Calais is an intensely interesting old place, and I am heartily glad I came this way. I think the place fully justifies what Ruskin says of it, as being ‘an epitome of all that makes the continent of Europe interesting,’ for its unbroken links between the Past and the Present. (See *Modern Painters*, Vol. IV.)

“ The old church has still a good deal remaining of that which was built in the eleventh century, — massive Norman work, careless in detail, bold in design. I came upon it very effectively this morning in a little

walk of exploration. Turning out of the square, filled with the wooden booths of yesterday's market, I perceived it suddenly, half-way down a broad old street. It is grey, and beaten by the strong sea-winds, and is placed as if it had turned a little to show you a bit of its rough west front, as well as its nave and tower. The tower is square and firm, not high, and ending in a spire not very arrow-shaped, but large-looking. This tower, as Ruskin says, in describing the view from the sea as you approach, is the 'principal of the three that rise above the waste of surfy sand and hillocked shore: the lighthouse for life, and the belfry for labour, and this for patience and praise.'

"Calais is entered by one of two old gates—one 'giving upon' the port, the other upon the new industrial suburb, St. Pierre, inland. One of them Hogarth painted, making the scene around it the vehicle for his usual satire—a fat monk poking his finger contentedly into a piece of uncooked beef destined for his dinner,

whilst starved-looking soldiers are eyeing the meat wistfully. The scene is laid during siege-time.

“ I saw a different picture this morning—one that Edouard Frère, with his fresh, simple feeling, would have had only to reproduce : not a touch need have been added, for there *was* the picture. A school of lower middle-class boys, each on his cane-bottomed chair (and no chair put quite straight) in the north aisle of the church : the boys more or less inattentive to a sing-song sermon which somebody was preaching in the nave—boys with every variety of expression ; that of good-humoured indifference predominating. By the side of one of the broken rows of scholars, sat a young monk, a master, too devout—evidently too absorbed in the service—to notice the boys at all. At the top of the school was a more fatherly ecclesiastic, as vigilant as one can be when one is old, sleepy, and very short-sighted. Seeing that the boys in the front row were models of good behaviour, the old man sat calmly satisfied, in the belief

that the rest were as sedate. Anything but that, however!

“Enough! You will take every care of yourself, Madeleine, and write to me in Paris : Rue des Ecuries d’Artois, number 266. The street lies between the Champs Elysées and the Rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré.

“Your very affectionate husband

“PAUL WARNER.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

IT was with genuine pleasure to find himself again abroad, that Warner had written of Calais to his wife. His spirits rose, his eye was brighter, his step quicker and more confident, before he had been four-and-twenty hours on the soil of the land which had cradled his infancy and developed his manhood. As he walked on that October afternoon—the first since his arrival—along the rampart-promenade that encircles Calais, he missed, it is true, the emerald pastures and leaf-laden trees, the garden-like beauty of England. There stretched before him a barer landscape, but a wider, ampler one: a larger earth unrolled her miles of sea, and coast, and plain; while field and river and distant ranges

of long low hills were swept by a more liberal air and over-arched by a loftier sky.

“Strange!” Warner thought; “and it may be but a fancy, but I think the characteristics of French scenery are reflected in her Art. Compare her Art with the kind that has been popular in England : it has less of detail, more of general effect. There, a number of particulars determine the *ensemble*; here, in France, the *ensemble* dominates over the details. There, the degree of finish; here, the sweeping breadth of outline. There, the crude, strong colour; here, the tenderer tones, for subtle harmonies. If Turner was influenced, as his great critic admits he was, by Covent Garden cabbages, river-side barges, and the fogs of the City, did not the broad curves and quiet colours of French scenery influence Ingres in figure-painting; and did not its luminous, not glaring atmosphere, its larger effects, its uncrowded spaces, mould the mind as well as the landscapes of Constant Troyon?—yes; and now of Daubigny.”

But these reflections of Warner’s were

interrupted by the thought that he must write to his wife by the evening's post. He returned to the hotel, and indited, before dinner, the letter we have already seen. Next day, about noon, he started for Paris.

Dusk had fallen early, that October evening, and at six o'clock the waning day struggled with the lamp-light in the big waiting-rooms and luggage-halls of the station in the Place Roubaix. It was quite dark before a tedious official had chalked Warner's boxes as uncharged with town dues, and free to be carried at once to the passenger's destination. To engage a little coupé-carriage was the work of a minute, and soon afterwards our friend was being rapidly driven between the endless gas-lights—the long shop-lines—of the Rue Lafayette.

It seemed the old familiar life of earlier days. Here, with apparently the same movement as in years that were past, beat, in fulfilment of daily recurring work, the pulses of Imperial France. Little was changed. Here,

indeed, a new street had been opened, an old block of buildings destroyed; there, a rotten row of tumbling tenements had given place to a house so ornamented that it might have been a palace. But it seemed that nothing else was altered. The same police-sergeants with their three-cornered hats stood with hands clasped before them at the street-turnings; the same rag-gatherers tossed with the old agility the savings from the gutter's refuse into the deep baskets at their backs; workmen in the well-remembered blouses trudged away from masonry and scaffolding; white-capped women as of yore carried bread-staffs from the bakers' or vegetables from the market; the same carriages glided quickly and quietly over the asphalted roads, bearing the happy rich to banquet or theatre.

These things he saw with his outward eye, but what with the eye of the mind? Behind him, in past years, a youth that might have led to other issues than those which were now impending. In another city, across the

Channel, a wife—with the affection of young days, and with their inexperience — divided from him by a more difficult barrier than the sea. In this city of Paris, or upon the terraced hill-side of its northern suburb, the graves of a father and mother, in the dark and crowded cemetery.

These things struck him, and they, too, passed from his mind, as he thought once more of the brilliant town around him, and of its circumstances at that time. A great Englishman has remarked that there is always a solemn impression produced by entering at night into an immense city. It is caused in part by the almost unconscious feeling that every house in every street of that city possesses its own secret; that well-nigh every heart, of all the thousands there, is “in some of its imaginings a secret to the heart nearest it.” This impression, always a strong and solemn one, was doubly solemn and strong at that time, when Warner, remembering the smouldering fire of discontent among the lower classes and

the literary—the impetuous and the logical—thought of that immense city and of its strange power; of its electric influence upon peoples and thrones.

What various elements in artificial and discordant combination were then within her limits, as she lay open to the eye of the mind, from the gorgeous line of her western suburbs, through the centre devoted to trades not less prosperous than elegant, and on to the crowded quarters of the artisan population—modern Belleville, or that old Faubourg Saint Antoine, a very synonym for disturbance, and the terror of rural France! Who could measure the influences which were there at work? Who could tell what was really in the heart of Paris, and what would happen on the morrow if Canrobert and the soldiers of the Empire—Turcos, Spahis, and Zouaves—could but vanish into air for only a dozen hours? For did not sullen discontent brood not only over the mysterious Faubourg, but over the district upon which has fallen a double portion of its restless spirit?

Meanwhile, however, "order reigned." There was the noise of talk and there was the noise of traffic in brilliant café and brilliant street. Nothing else. The tradesman made haste to be rich; the spendthrift made haste to be poor; and the gaieties and pleasures of the Boulevard were made safe by the throng in the barracks.

Warner, as he told his wife in his letter from Calais, had taken rooms in the Rue des Ecuries d'Artois, which, lying between the Avenue des Champs Elysées and the Faubourg Saint Honoré, gently ascends from the Rue de Morny to the Boulevard Hausmann. The street has one characteristic which stamps it as Parisian. In London, we have the squalid and disgusting tenements known as "rents" and "mews" within a stone's-throw of great mansions or palatial club-houses; but the wretched dwellings are always in the rear of the magnificent—they are known, not to the lackey who lounges in the halls of the neighbouring rich, but to the curate who trudges

from cheap and distant lodgings, on his mission of civilization. Out of sight, they are out of mind. Where our Dives dines, Lazarus cannot eat of the crumbs ; for a better fashion than that of the Jews allows them to be sold in secret, as the perquisites of over-fed servants.

In Paris, save in the thoroughfares devoted to luxurious trades, the homes of rich and poor are less strictly divided. A great man's presence does not necessitate the removal of his social inferiors. In Warner's street—the "street of the stables of Artois"—the hotel of a foreign embassy was contentedly placed between the open shop of a laundress and the ground-floor store-room of a dealer in coke and firewood ; and next to the house in which Warner had rooms, there was a little tobacco-shop, where a soldier's widow sat from morning to night, selling pipes and cigars, fusees and postage-stamps.

Warner, on reaching his destination, was received by the house-porter, by the porter's sister, who was maid-of-all-work for his apart-

ments, and also by the artist, whose occupancy of one floor of the place had induced our friend to take up his abode under that roof. Alphonse Pierson, the painter, was an old companion of Warner's. The two had studied together at the School of Fine Arts, and had since maintained a pleasant acquaintance, though not a close friendship.

Pierson and Warner talked together in the Parisian's studio till late at night. Next morning Paul marched off to the Louvre without waiting for the ten o'clock post, by which English letters were delivered. He saw no use in wasting an hour when there was little probability that he would hear from his wife : it was really too soon for her to have anything to say. After a rapid and delightful survey of a few of his old friends, hung on the gallery-wall, Paul adjourned to breakfast at a restaurant on the Boulevard ; then he returned to the Louvre. It was late in the afternoon when he reached his rooms again, and found on his dressing-table an unexpected letter.

*“ Craven Hill, London,
Monday, October 12th.*

“ MY DEAREST PAUL,

“ I LOOKED out anxiously for your letter, and was so glad to get it this morning. It is all good news, and makes me quite happy ; but you cannot guess how much I have missed you. I do believe you will benefit a great deal by the change of scene you are now having. Be sure and enjoy yourself, but take care of yourself. Do not work too hard. I know it is such tiring occupation looking at pictures all day long.

“ What a pretty description of Calais ! I almost wish I had gone with you ; only you know I should not have got on with my French like you, and you know I should not have understood even half the things that there are to see.

“ I have not got any news at all for you. I am glad to say the servants behave very well to me. The house goes on quite regularly ; only it looks very empty. I was very foolish in your studio, after you had gone away. I

wonder if you thought of me during your journey?

“ This is such a dull silly note, Paul dear ; but I must finish. I shall take this to the post myself.

“ When you have any spare time, I wish you would write me letters as if you were talking to me. Now, good-bye. You know that wherever you go I am always

“ Your devoted wife,

“ MADELEINE.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEN Warner was well installed in his rooms in the Rue des Ecuries, and when once again the multiform life of Paris had encircled him in forms familiar to his youth, he felt for the present little inclined to move onwards to Italy or to return to England. More than before, he recognised the inexhaustible attractions of the city which is the centre of modern civilization and the fostering mother of all recent Art.

It was a time of year when the world of fashion had not come back to Paris. The class which is not there permitted to monopolize the name of society had not returned to town from châteaux in the country and pavilions by the sea. But the literary, the scientific, and the artistic population were already at their winter's

work. Chemists were making new discoveries, linguists propounding new theories, poets writing new poems, and playwrights, new plays. At the Sorbonne, professors were lecturing to earnest listeners; in the journals of the day, political and social questions were eagerly discussed; painters were painting, sculptors were modelling, in the thousand *ateliers* between Montmartre and Mont Parnasse.

This intellectual activity, creating, criticizing, changing—which gives to Paris perpetual leadership, and to France perpetual youth, and gives these not less surely when French armies are shot down in the valleys of Lorraine than when they are victorious in the plains of Lombardy—could not but fascinate a man who to the power of appreciating such intellectual activity in the abstract joined the opportunity of observing it in detail. Something of the impulse which the English poet has attributed to Andrea del Sarto during his residence at the Court of Francis, was experienced by Warner in the midst of the mental movement, encourage-

ment, and incentives which characterise the Paris of to-day. These things braced him for work ; and before he had been in France a fortnight he had unpacked his easel and had set it up in the studio of his comrade and neighbour.

When Warner chose a subject for a picture he showed in choice and treatment something of his character. Suggestion after suggestion that rose to his mind was rejected, as falling short of the thing that he wanted. But when he thought of a theme which he liked, he began to work at it without a day's delay. The treatment might not eventually be satisfactory, but at all events the subject was. Thus it had been with his picture of the previous winter—*Mary in the House of John*. And thus it had been with a less successful picture—his portrait of Madeleine. Now again, Warner had seized upon a subject, and was at work upon it, with only an hour's interval for breakfast, from early in the October or November morning to the fading of the autumn light. From eight till eleven,

from twelve to four, the painter stood or sat before the canvas; in front of him, the living model; at his side, brushes and colours, a palette and a cloth.

Yet there were hours devoted to lighter tasks, or to occupations which were not tasks at all. Such were the evenings Warner spent at the house of a lady who had been an old acquaintance, perhaps a patient, of his father's, and whose dwelling-place was the resort of many an English visitor and English resident. Every Thursday night Mrs. Burney "received," in a pretty set of rooms high up in the Champs Elysées. Pierson, the painter, who lived in the Rue des Ecuries, went to pay his respects to this lady, from time to time; and on his telling her of the presence of Warner in Paris, our friend was made free of her receptions and was treated as a welcome guest.

Alphonse Pierson took Warner to another kind of "reception"—that which was held by a fashionable hair-dresser every afternoon throughout the year. Pierson, with an artist's

love for whatever is strange, thought that the "Maison Chambord"—as this barber in vogue styled his room and his business—was worth a stray visit; so Warner was conducted thither as to a somewhat curious spectacle. The Maison Chambord was on the fourth floor of a house in the Rue de la Paix: three storeys above the rooms where Alexandre, the fashionable tailor, deigned to supply the *petits crevés* of the day with shapely clothes at some twenty pounds the suit. There was nothing to acquaint the public of the streets with the fact that it was here that resided the great artist in hair. A simple brass plate, engraved with the words "Maison Chambord," decorated the door of his salon.

The interior was equally simple. There was nothing whatever to resemble the gaudy chambers, glass and gilt, with marble tables and imposing rows of oils and lotions, in which fashionable professors of the art must usually be sought. But in the plain arm-chairs, waiting their turns, were a group of known men. Chambord's was a miniature club, to which

there was no further subscription than the fee of a franc for shaving—about three times the usual charge for that simple operation. In his apartment, partisans of the old Orleanist monarchy and of the actual Empire met upon neutral ground. A marquis *de la vieille roche*—gifted with youth and a great rent-roll—chatted with the painter whose *Ariadne* had been the success of the year. A dramatic critic discussed with a deputy, now the expenditure of Baron Hausmann, now the last comedy by Sardou.

Chambord himself was a man of five or six and fifty; with grey hair, in short curls, and a complexion like a well-ripened peach. He alone used the razor, and he operated with a single sweep upon each upturned cheek. It was his assistant's business merely to drape the subject for the master's touch, and then to lather him. "Prepare for me that head!" cried the artist to his helper. He was as familiar with his clients as if they had been his brethren. When a man entered already in a hurry to depart, and

signified the same to Chambord, the imperturbable barber looked at him with a smile, and remarked "In an hour you will be far from here," with an emphasis worthy of Ravel, the comedian. He was good enough to inform Warner, as he approached our friend with a razor, that he had a well-to-do countenance—" *Vous avez une tête de prospérité.*"

CHAPTER XXV.

WARNER'S evening engagements were not very numerous in Paris; and he was sufficiently absorbed by his new work not to wish to increase the number of them. But it happened now and then, unavoidably, that he had a couple of houses to which to resort. Two houses, rather than two hosts; since, through modern improvements in the art of visiting, we are bidden to see crowded drawing-rooms—not individual friends—and we may congratulate ourselves that society succeeds in fulfilling very literally the apostolic injunction “Use hospitality to *all* men.” It is gratifying to know of an apostolic injunction which society is inclined to obey.

Warner had promised to go one evening in the beginning of December to the house of a landscape painter who lived near the Luxembourg. But it was Mrs. Burney's reception day, and she had said to him, the previous week, "You will be here next Thursday, Mr. Warner, I hope. My favourite novelist is coming, with his wife. I want to show him to you." The encouraged artist could not refuse, and when the Thursday came he was duly in the Champs Elysées.

Of course he saw less than he had expected to see of the favourite writer of romances. When very famous people come a long way to be seen, a host of admirers must be asked to meet them, and each guest has but a small share of a great man's conversation. Warner, however, had seen enough of the novelist to enable him to carry back to England a fair impression of a personage whose name was now a familiar word. He was upon the point of sliding out unobserved—to make his way across the river to the Luxembourg quarter—when an

English friend of Alphonse Pierson's, with whom he had been talking, introduced him, through some little circumstance which seemed to make it requisite, to a lady who was apparently alone.

“Mr. Paul Warner!” said this guest. “Scarcely a stranger then, for I knew Dr. Warner, your father, several years ago.”

She looked very handsome in a room which from its brilliant mellow light and harmonious colours was well adapted to display people. Perhaps she would not have been so attractive with simpler things about her; but that is a problem which Warner was not called upon to solve. A tall fine figure, regular if somewhat large features, small bright grey eyes—with drooping eyelids and long lashes—and masses of black hair, sparkling with diamonds, were, at all events, enough to draw attention to her at a moment when these beauties were favourably displayed. In moments of passiveness—one cannot say, of rest—her face, though still handsome, wore a look of almost

sullen reflection. In talking, it rapidly became animated, and even brilliant. It was not that she was pleased herself, but that she was determined to please men. In their admiration she found the power that sustained her.

"Are you living in Paris?" asked this lady. "I understood you had settled in England."

"So I have," answered Warner; "but a man must have change, you know, and I am here only for that purpose."

"But Paris can hardly be much change, since every one knows it well, and you, no doubt, know it particularly well."

"I may perhaps go further south in a week or two, and see a little natural scenery. The Cornice Road is what I am thinking of. I never yet saw the finest shore of the Mediterranean."

"I am going to spend the winter at Nice, being only here in passing," said his companion. "We may perhaps meet, Mr. Warner."

“Let me hope so, Mrs. ——” He had not caught the name, so wisely dropped his voice.

“But you will find nothing at Nice,” she remarked. “You figure painters should go to Rome, and not only for the sake of the Antique. To be sure there is an entrancing view at Nice, from the Hôtel des Princes, where I generally stay. But what is that to you, who will be on the watch for some water-bearer *à la* Hébert? Those Roman girls are wonderful, indeed!”

“Yes,” said Warner; “and you care for Art, I see.”

“I am devoted to it,” slowly languished his new acquaintance. “Thinking of the *Mal’aria* in the Luxembourg,” she continued, “one may thank the annual calamity which produced such a picture. Given a Hébert, Mr. Warner, and pestilence ceases to be an unmixed evil.”

So for ten minutes or so they talked on, about scenery, pictures, and books. It was more than time for Warner to be going, and—though contented with the conversation—he was bound

to seize the first opportunity of closing it. When it came, the lady seized it instead and departed in another direction, while Warner pressed his way to the door of egress.

“Mr. Greyling,” shouted the English servant, at the door of entrance, just as the painter had quitted the rooms, and a middle-aged man, who looked very worn and tired—as after a long and harassing journey, or a severe exhausting illness—summoned up energy enough to meet his hostess without the languor which before and afterwards had possession of his face.

It was a fine night, and though late, Warner—who had by this time got downstairs—determined to walk to the neighbourhood of the Luxembourg. Hot rooms made him long for fresh air, and to drive home from an evening party, when weather permitted of walking, had always seemed to him a folly.

This was a night which he was inclined to think peculiar to Paris, or which, at all events, made more impression on him there than any-

where else. It was a moonlight night, and made all Paris visible, showing so clearly the slowly-gliding Seine, the bridges, the houses, the steeples, and the domes. Dark and definite rose the towers of Notre Dame and the arrowy spire of the Sainte Chapelle. Yet the moon itself was hidden, and the lofty distant heaven was veiled with masses of light interlacing clouds—a broken web of filmy grey, stretched, as it were, and broken in the stretching, to cover the great vault of the sky.

Hurrying along, alone, by the river-side, Warner thought scarcely more of Madeleine than he had done in the crowded rooms which he had but lately left. She had so little part in his life in Paris that it was not unnatural, perhaps, that thoughts of her should not be constantly rising in his mind. He thought of his art, and of a possible Future—a Future which Madeleine, however sweet and pure and true, could but passively, silently share. It was not in her power to make his Future: it was scarcely in her power to mar it.

Yet he was all to her, and must ever be all, however little she might become to him. He did not feel this, and had he thought of her then it might have been in words of recent verse, expressing only too well, in music bitter-sweet, the distance of their separation.

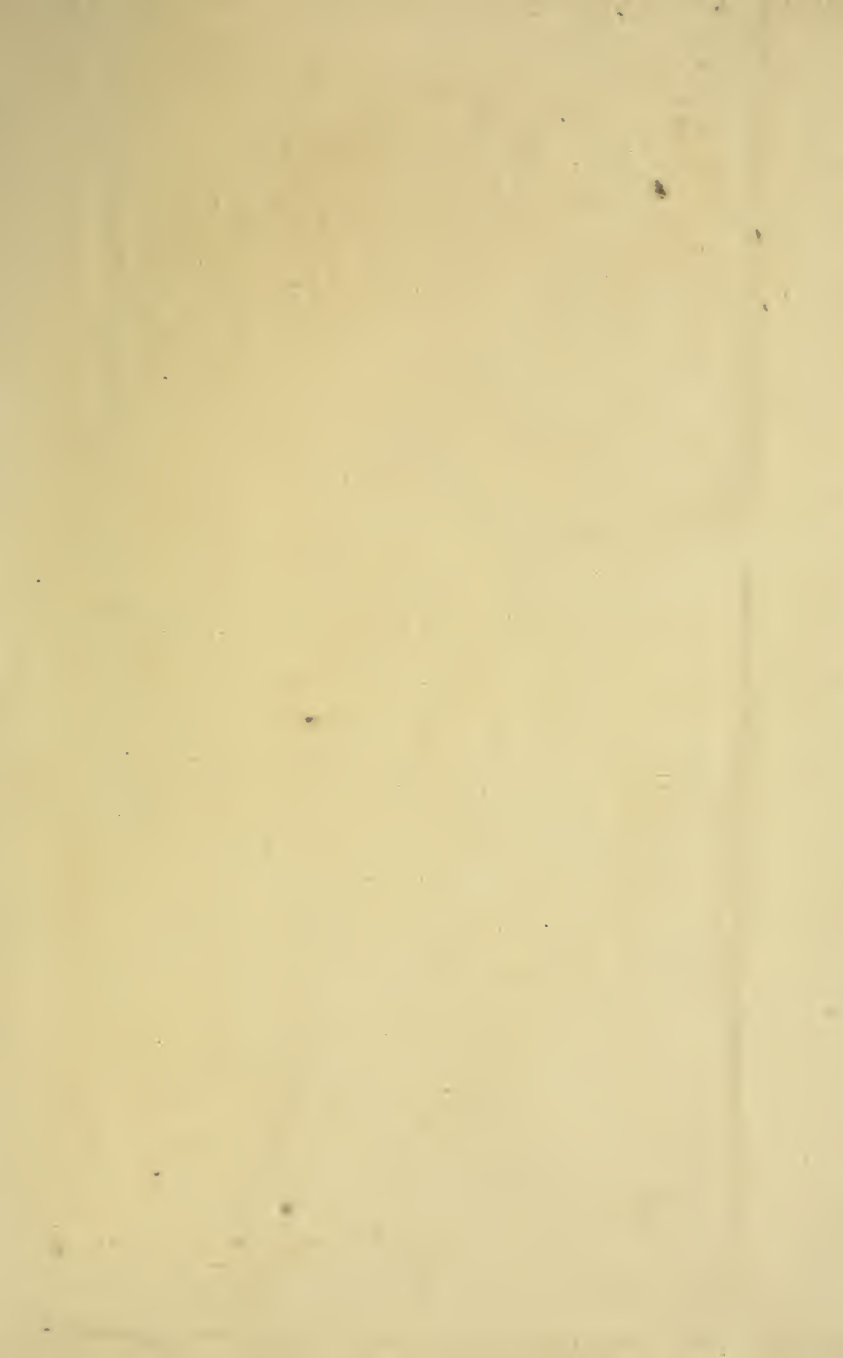
We stand on either side the sea,
Stretch hands, blow kisses, laugh and lean,
I towards you, you towards me ;
But what hears either save the keen
Grey sea between ?

It may be that the complete artist rarely loves with the constancy not uncommon in less gifted natures. In the manner of his affections he will certainly be delicate, and he may be intense too. He will be more susceptible than most men ; but his impressions will perhaps quickly pass. He will evoke, in one at least of those around him, a devotion great and unchanging ; but he may never be able to devote himself. For the richest nature is not inexhaustible, and cannot always give to one object the force it has lavished on another.

The most complete artist, then, is possibly a man of transient loves. Art is the enduring passion of his life, and the genius of his work the only mistress sure of his fidelity.

END OF VOL. I.





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